Rommel's Desert Army

Text by
MARTIN WINDROW

Colour plates by
MICHAEL ROFFE

MEN-AT-ARMS SERIES

EDITOR: MARTIN WINDROW

Rommel's Desert Army

Text by MARTIN WINDROW

Colour plates by MICHAEL ROFFE

OSPREY PUBLISHING LIMITED

Published in 1976 by
Osprey Publishing Ltd
12–14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP
Member Company of the George Philip Group

© Copyright 1976 Osprey Publishing Ltd

Reprinted 1977

This book is copyrighted under the Berne Convention. All rights reserved. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, 1956, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, electrical, chemical, mechanical, optical, photo-copying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner. Enquiries should be addressed to the Publishers.

ISBN 0 85045 095 0

The author is particularly grateful for the assistance of Brian Leigh Davis, Andrew Biwandi, Daniel Rose, Philip Katcher and Digby Smith during the preparation of the text and assembly of the illustrations. The literature on the desert war is vast, but the main sources used during the preparation of this book were: *Uniforms, Organisation and History of the Afrika Korps* by R. J. Bender and R. D. Law, *Uniformie Militaria Italiane* by Elio and Vittorio Del Giudice, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Second World War* by Alan Reid, *The Foxes of the Desert* by Paul Carell, *Alamein* by C. E. Lucas Phillips, *German Army Uniforms and Insignia 1933–45* by Brian Leigh Davis, *Army Uniforms of World War II* by Andrew Mollo and Malcolm McGregor, *Army Badges and Insignia of World War II* by Guido Rosignoli, *Armies & Weapons* magazine, various issues, *World War II*, various issues, *Armour in Profile* and *AFV Profiles*, various issues.

Filmset by BAS Printers Limited, Wallop, Hampshire
Printed in Hong Kong

Introduction

For the hundreds of thousands of soldiers and airmen who fought in North Africa between September 1940 and May 1943, and for the post-war generation of students of military history, the desert war holds a special fascination. The reasons for the growth of this unique nostalgia around a campaign which was as bloody, as costly, and as agonising to the individual as any other aspect of the Second World War, are complex. Certain elements can be identified, but the whole is still greater than the sum of its parts.

Firstly there was the special nature of the terrain. The North African desert is a harsh, dead land which shows no mercy to human beings, but which still exercises a fascination over the Northern European mind. It is as sterile as a dry bone, but where there is no moisture there can be no conspicuous decay, and war leaves it strangely unscarred. There are few centres of population and few civilian inhabitants; and for these reasons it lends itself to a particularly pure form of warfare, in which professional soldiers can operate free of the demoralising knowledge that they are raping nature and ruining innocent lives. It is a sort of gigantic sand-table on which life-size military exercises can be carried out in isolation from the rest of mankind – albeit with live ammunition, and real corpses . . . A case could, in fact, be made out that its allure is the more dangerous for that, and that the world desperately needs the conventional inhibitions against waging war; but that is an argument far outside the scope of this book.

The spell of the desert fell on German, Italian and British Commonwealth soldiers alike, and despite the very real discomfort and danger it seems, on balance, to have been an enriching spell which went a little way towards compensating men for the horror of battle. The isolation in which relatively small units moved through the huge silence of the desert seems to have bred a heightened sense of comradeship. This bond of

Italian infantry in the desert; Marmarica, late 1941. The light machine-gun is the badly designed Breda 6·5mm Model 30. (Imperial War Museum)

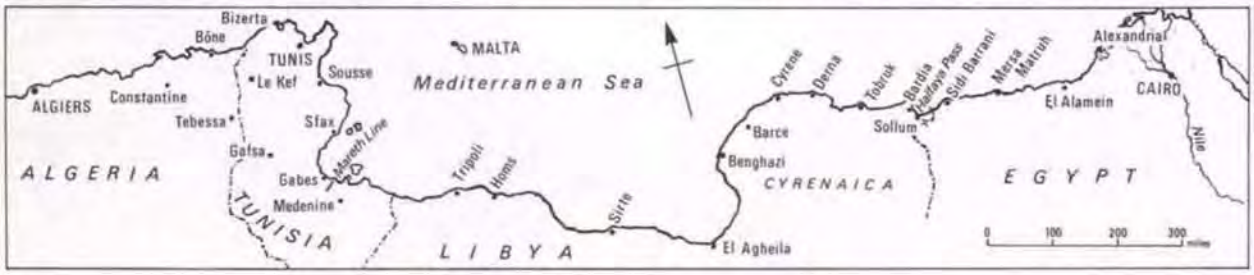
Italian medical officer – note single star on shoulders and cap, indicating 2nd Lieutenant – examining wounded *sergente maggiore*. From the visible detail of his collar 'flames' the NCO is a Bersagliere, although the usual cock's-tail plume is not worn on the topi. Note that both wear olive-green European uniforms – not uncommon in the desert, where temperatures vary sharply. (Imperial War Museum)

common humanity even extended across the battle-lines; there are too many accounts of the mutual respect and tolerance which linked men of the Deutsches Afrika Korps and the 8th Army for this claim to be dismissed by cynics as total mythology. Again, the special conditions called for a pragmatic approach to soldiering; dehumanising 'bull' and rigidity of behaviour were pointless – even dangerous – in the desert, and all veterans speak of the sense of almost carefree self-sufficiency which made service life more tolerable, even for conscripts. It was a style of warfare which produced commanders of dash and originality on both sides; and the name of the German commanding general, Erwin Rommel, has passed into household use as an epitome of skill, daring, humanity and soldierly integrity. Africa was the one major theatre of war to which the Germans did not commit Waffen-SS troops; and Rommel deliberately ignored direct orders from Germany to introduce into the desert war some of the viler military crimes so sadly characteristic of other fronts. He was, quite simply, a gentleman; and his murder by forced suicide at the hands of the Nazis in 1944 is one of the most striking single examples of the clash between the best and the worst in the German character, which brought that country down in ruins the following year.

The title chosen for this book is in the series style, although the purist may perhaps argue that there were periods of weeks when the German forces in Africa were not 'Rommel's Army', strictly speaking. The purist is, of course, correct, but the author would be amused to watch him trying to make this nice point of terminology in the company of Afrika-Korps veterans. In the case of the Italian forces the criticism is a great deal more valid. The author was anxious to include some information on this neglected subject for the English-speaking reader, and for large parts of the desert campaign Rommel had under command several Italian divisions. While the bulk of the Italian forces in Africa were nominally independent of DAK for many months, and while the exact command relationship between Rommel, Oberkommando der Wehrmacht and the Italian *Comando Supremo* was tangled and ambiguous at some periods, the author feels that Rommel's *de facto* field command of all Axis forces in the Western Desert justifies the title.

A note on Axis commands, which may be helpful in following the chronology:

On 19 February 1941 the Deutsches Afrika-Korps (DAK) was created, comprising 5 leichte Division, 15 Panzer-Division and supporting elements. On 15 August 1941 Rommel's command was redesignated Panzergruppe Afrika: it comprised 15 and 21 Panzer-Division and Afrika-Division zbV, collectively retaining the title DAK; plus the Italian Ariete, Trieste, Pavia, Bologna,



The Afrika Korps provided a much-needed element of powerful motorised units for the Axis forces. Here members of an armoured car unit (SdKfz 263 wireless command version illustrated) fraternise with Italian Bersaglieri motorcyclists. Note the topi plumes of the latter, and the slung folding-bayonet carbine. (Imperial War Museum)

Brescia and Savona Divisions. On 30 January 1942 the command was redesignated Panzerarmee Afrika, or alternatively deutsche-italienische Panzerarmee. Within this command DAK retained its identity. On 23 February 1943 the Panzerarmee was redesignated 1 Italienische Armee under the command of the Italian General Messe; again, DAK retained its identity within this command, now comprising 15 and 21 Panzer-Division and 90 and 164 leichte Afrika-Division. Rommel was on the same day promoted to command Heeresgruppe Afrika, consisting of 1 Italienische Armee and von Arnim's Panzer-Armeeoberkommando 5 in northern Tunisia. On 9 March 1943 von Arnim succeeded Rommel in command of the Heeresgruppe.

Throughout the book the author has tried to limit the use of the title 'Afrika-Korps' or the abbreviation DAK to references to that actual formation of two, three or four divisions – the mobile spearhead of Rommel's army, and the veteran heart of the Axis forces in Africa.

Space has forbidden the inclusion of a comprehensive set of orders-of-battle, which are largely available from standard works; this book is, after all, designed mainly for the student of military costume and the hobby enthusiast. It is hoped that the August 1942 order-of-battle, the Panzer-Armeeoberkommando 5 order-of-battle for March 1943, and the brief notes on the main German divisions engaged in Africa will suffice. Details of the service of individual Italian divisions have proved too elusive for the author to present a similar set of notes, but it is hoped that the many specific references in the chronology will allow readers to place individual units in their proper perspective in the overall picture.

For thirty years the average British and American student of the Second World War has

been encouraged to see the contribution of Italian troops in North Africa as negligible; this is a shameful libel on thousands of very gallant soldiers who on many occasions fought with great courage in spite of inadequate weapons, minimal transport, and unspeakable leadership. The popular image of the enormous migrations of Italian prisoners of 1940, trekking cheerfully towards the 'cage' under the careless guns of a handful of Tommies, should not be allowed to obscure the tragic heroism of, say, the Ariete Division in 1942. Well aware that their obsolete tanks were death-traps, they still attacked without flinching, and stood their ground to the last when the battle turned against them. It is unworthy of anyone who has not faced the same dangers to deny at least some of the Italian units the respect so readily and justly given to the DAK and the 8th Army.

Erwin Rommel, in his simple desert uniform; note Knight's Cross with Oakleaves at throat above *Pour le Mérite*, which dates the picture between 20 March 1941 and 20 January 1942, when he was awarded the Swords. (Imperial War Museum)

Chronology of the Desert War

September 1940

In the summer of 1940 Italy had some 236,000 men; 1,811 guns; 339 tanks and 151 combat aircraft in her North African possessions. The fall of France in June removed any threat from French North Africa to the west, and Marshal Balbo's forces thus faced only General Wavell's small British and Empire garrison in Egypt. Organised into two combat divisions, the 7th Armoured and 4th Indian, this had an effective combat strength of only 31,000 men. In western Libya Balbo had General Gariboldi's 5th Army (X, XX, and XXIII Corps, with six infantry and two blackshirt divisions). In the eastern zone was General Berti's 10th Army (XXI and XXII Corps, with three infantry, one blackshirt and two native infantry divisions). Mussolini pressed Balbo – and, after the latter's death at the hands of his own anti-aircraft guns, his successor Graziani – to invade Egypt without delay; the Italian dictator wished his offensive to coincide with Hitler's proposed invasion of England. Graziani resisted this pressure, however, correctly judging that his transport and supply situation did not allow an immediate advance along the single, incomplete, practical motor road along the coast. His attack was finally launched on 13 September. General Bergonzoli's XXIII Corps, with four divisions and an inadequately-equipped armoured group, made slow progress under punishing conditions, but after a series of skirmishes with elements of the British 7th Armoured Division the '23rd of March' Blackshirt division took Sidi Barrani on the evening of the 16th.

Both Mussolini, and, for very different motives, Wavell, hoped that Graziani would immediately push on another seventy-five miles to the important base of Mersa Matruh. Graziani refused to overreach himself, however. He insisted on remaining at Sidi Barrani while he improved his supply lines and awaited reinforcements. He constructed several fortified camps east of Sidi Barrani, stretching some forty miles from Maktila on the coast to a point named Sofafi South-West far into the desert; and here he stayed, awaiting

reinforcements which never arrived due to the demands of the Balkan campaign. The camps were badly sited, far too widely dispersed for effective mutual support given the low level of motorisation of the Italian forces. Simultaneously Churchill took the courageous decision to strip Home Forces of three tank battalions and strong artillery units – despite the danger of German invasion – and send them to Wavell.

December 1940

Moving secretly at night, the British 4th Indian and 7th Armoured Divisions concentrated in the desert opposite the southern sector of the Italian defensive line. At dawn on the 9th, while a brigade under Brigadier Selby struck west along the coast road at Maktila, 7th Armoured Division penetrated the southern tip of the enemy line and turned north to cut off the bulk of the Italian forces, ravaging their rear areas as they went. 4th Indian Division, with the single battalion of heavily-armoured Matilda II tanks, struck between the positions of the Cirene Division at Rabia and the Maletti motorised group at Nibeiwa, turning north to attack the latter. The obsolete M.11 tanks of the Maletti Group were no match for the Matildas of 7th Royal Tank Regiment, and within a short time 4th Indian Division was on its way northwards to overrun the Tummar complex, held by General Pescatori's 2nd Libyan Division. The 7th Armoured Division reached the sea before night on the 9th, and the cut-off Libyans were finally beaten into submission the following day. Naval gunfire helped 'Selbyforce' to drive Sibille's stubborn 1st Libyan Division out of Maktila, and the following day the Italians were ordered to retreat to the Halfaya-Sollum-Capuzzo line. Cirene fell back successfully, but the Catanzara Division was caught between Buqbuq and Sollum and very roughly handled. In all, 10th Army had lost 38,000 prisoners, 237 guns and 73 tanks, as against total British casualties of 624. At the moment of victory Lieutenant General O'Connor's forces (soon to be designated 13 Corps) were weakened by the removal of 4th Indian Division, earmarked for Eritrea, but O'Connor did not allow the enemy to regain the initiative. He surged westwards in pursuit and crossed the Libyan frontier on the 14th. On the 18th he invested Bardia, shutting up Bergonzoli's XXIII Corps (Marmarica and 23rd of March divisions) and the survivors of Cirene and Catanzara in the perimeter. That day O'Connor received as replacements for 4th Indian the 6th Australian Division.

An Oberstleutnant in full tropical uniform and high-laced desert boots officiates at the marriage by proxy of one of his men. Note AFRIKAKORPS cuff title, epaulettes of rank, and piped officer's pattern field cap. (Imperial War Museum)

January 1941

On the morning of the 3rd O'Connor assaulted Bardia from the west; the Australians cut the perimeter, allowing the twenty-three remaining Matildas of 7th Royal Tank Regiment (the remainder were largely immobilised by lack of spares) to surge into the fortress and cut the defenders in two. On the 5th the Italians surrendered, and another 45,000 men, 460 guns and 131 tanks went 'into the bag'. 7th Armoured Division meanwhile advanced westwards to cut off the important port of Tobruk, held by the Sirte Division. After the fall of Bardia the Australians followed, and the attack on Tobruk began on 21 January, supported by the dozen remaining serviceable Matildas and some enthusiastic Australians in captured M.13/40 tanks. By nightfall the vital supply harbour was in British hands, as were another 25,000 prisoners,

208 guns and 23 tanks. Total losses suffered by 6th Australian Division in the attacks on Bardia and Tobruk were 179 dead and 638 wounded.

Graziani now decided to hold the line of the Jebel Akhdar, the high rocky outcrop of hills between Derna on the coast and Mechili in the deep desert. He placed an infantry division at the former position and General Babini's armoured brigade at Mechili, confident that he could prevent any further advance towards Benghazi, and apparently ignoring the fact that the terrain would prevent these two formations from acting in concert. On the 24th the Australians approached Derna, while 7th Armoured Division struck south-west into the desert and savaged Babini's tanks at Mechili; the Italians retreated north into the Jebel, leaving a clear run across the 'blue' for the Gulf of Sirte, cutting off the whole bulge of Cyrenaica.

On the 9th, at a Berghof conference, Hitler decided that a small German force must be sent to Libya without delay – within about three weeks. Its task would be limited; it would consist of a small but modern tank unit, anti-tank and anti-aircraft troops, and engineers with large stocks of mines. This *Sperrverband* or blocking force would simply prevent further British advances in Libya, thus shoring up the shaken morale of the Italian ally, and preventing British forces now committed in Africa from being released to serve in other theatres. The news of the fall of Tobruk accelerated these plans, and on 31 January the first elements of the 5th Light Division left Germany for Naples.

February 1941

On the 1st, Graziani decided that he had no alternative but to abandon western Cyrenaica. Orders were given for the organisation of the defence of Tripolitania and the retreat of forces along the coast of Cyrenaica. The distance from Derna to a point opposite Beda Fomm on the Gulf of Sirte was 225 miles by the only major road, the Via Balbia. The distance from Mechili, in the Cyrenaican desert, straight across the 'bulge' to Beda Fomm, was 140 miles. 7th

A German 105mm howitzer in action. The crew wear a motley range of uniforms, including topis, field caps, side caps, shorts, long trousers, shirts and jackets. (Imperial War Museum)

Armoured Division under General O'Moore Creagh, travelling flat out through appalling terrain, won the race by half-an-hour. At noon on the 5th the 11th Hussars with artillery support reached Beda Fomm, trapping the retreating Italian army, while other elements of the division struck on down the coast to El Agheila, where the strip of 'tankable' country between the desert and the sea was only fifteen to twenty miles wide. El Agheila was reached on 3 February, and the Australians remorselessly pushed the Italian 10th Army forward into the trap. They assaulted Benghazi on the 6th, and the following day O'Connor's great offensive came to an end. In total, he had advanced 560 miles in two months, capturing 130,000 prisoners, including 22 generals and capturing or destroying 845 guns and 380 tanks; he had led a force of two divisions to victory over an army of nine divisions, for the cost of some 500 dead, 1,373 wounded and 56 missing. On 10 February Graziani was recalled to Italy and his conduct of operations was submitted to a searching enquiry.

At another Berghof conference on the 3rd, Hitler and his army commander-in-chief, von Brauchitsch, reacted to the Italian disaster with great energy. The 5th Light Division was to be followed at once by another Panzer regiment, and the remainder of the division from which it was drawn would be sent on later. The dive-bomber and heavy fighter units of Fliegerkorps X were to be committed to North African operations, the protection of Axis convoys from Italy to Africa, and the elimination of Malta as an RAF base. Finally, all German and Italian motorised units in Africa were to be subordinated to a single command, and German ground troops were to be led by a commander selected by the *Führer* in person.

The post was given to Generalleutnant Erwin Rommel, former commander of the Führer-begleit-Bataillon (the army escort battalion of the head of state) and of the successful 7th Panzer Division during the 1940 French campaign. Rommel was told of his appointment on the 6th, arrived in Rome on the 11th, and flew to Tripoli on the 12th. He was briefed on the latest situation: all that stood between him and O'Connor's advanced elements were some 7,000 Italian troops,

The Axis, always vulnerable at the tip of long lines of supply over a Mediterranean haunted by British submarines and aircraft, made use of any captured vehicles they could: here, a British 'Dingo' scout car, photographed in April 1942. Below the cross on the side appears the name 'Wurzel'. (US National Archives)

many of them second-line personnel, deployed in scattered and ill-equipped pockets. On the 14th the first troops of the 5th Light Division arrived in Tripoli harbour, and were sent up to the line at once. On the 19th Hitler issued a directive to the effect that a full Panzer division was to reinforce the 5th Light; and that German forces in Africa were to be termed Deutsches Afrika-Korps. On 24 February elements of Oberstleutnant Freiherr von Wechmar's 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion clashed with British armoured cars in a skirmish which cost the life of one British trooper. This was the first encounter between the Afrika Korps and the British.

March/April 1941

Wavell was greatly weakened by having many of his best units drawn away to fight in other theatres; 6th Australian and 2nd New Zealand Divisions went to Greece, with most of 2nd Armoured Division including its tanks. 7th Australian Division, newly arrived, was held in the Nile Delta base area for a planned operation in the Greek Islands, and 7th Armoured was pulled back to the Delta for an extensive refit – the prolonged advance had played havoc with its equipment. The great bulge of Cyrenaica was held only by weak elements of 2nd Armoured Division and 3rd Indian Motorised Brigade, with 9th Australian Division spread thinly along the coast, the bulk of them in Tobruk.

Rommel, too, was limited by his physical

means. The available Italian units – Bologna, Brescia, Pavia, Sabratha and Savona – were shaken and demoralised. The Ariete Armoured Division was just arriving in Africa, but had not yet 'shaken down' in the new surroundings and was equipped with obsolescent vehicles. Trieste, a motorised division, would follow, but not for several months. The 15th Panzer Division would arrive piecemeal during April, but could not be counted upon yet. With only 5th Light Division, Rommel was forbidden to undertake major operations. When 15th Panzer arrived he was to probe towards Agedabia and, if successful, Benghazi, at the end of May. He believed, however, that even if he took Benghazi it was indefensible unless the whole of Cyrenaica was controlled as well. He also believed in exploiting local success to the hilt, and was unscrupulous when it appeared advantageous to ignore his nominal superior, the Italian General Gariboldi. Rommel wanted the vital port of Tobruk, and on 24 March he began his wild gamble for it. With only 5th Light Division, he attacked the British screening units at El Agheila, and drove them rapidly back to Marsa Brega.

Without further ado Rommel pressed on, turning the desert flank of the position and splitting his command into three columns which raced up the coast road and fanned out across the desert towards Mechili. By 2 April he had occupied Agedabia, and brought Ariete and Brescia up in support. On the night of 3/4 April he entered Benghazi, while General Gariboldi tried vainly to find him and call him to account for unauthorised operations. Most of 5th Light Division sped north-eastwards to Mechili, followed by Ariete; that town fell on 7 April, and by a lucky chance Generals O'Connor and Neame were captured by a DAK patrol. Most of 3rd Armoured and 3rd Indian brigades went 'into the bag' shortly afterwards, and Rommel pressed on towards Derna while Brescia moved up the coast road. The Australian brigade from Benghazi managed to avoid the trap and reached Tobruk, with the now unified Axis army on their heels.

Wavell was instructed to hold Tobruk at all costs, as it could be supplied by sea and had strong defences captured intact from the Italians in January. The garrison of 36,000 men included 9th Australian and part of 7th Australian Division, an armoured car regiment and an anti-aircraft brigade. Commanded by 9th Australian's General Morshead, an iron-willed officer known to his men as 'The Pitiless Thing', this static target was not vulnerable to one of Rommel's favourite surprise flanking attacks. Rommel's series of assaults began on 10 April, and lasted until 4 May; they cost him heavy casualties, and were uniformly unsuccessful, although he was reinforced during the attacks by arriving elements of 15th Panzer Division. He was forced to detach some of his units to push on to the Egyptian frontier, where they fought a series of savage actions to secure the vital frontier positions of Fort Capuzzo, Sollum, and Halfaya Pass. This necessary division of his forces between two fronts robbed Rommel of decisive success.

A less common sight – a battery of captured 25-pdrs. in Afrika Korps service. This weapon was greatly respected by the German forces. (US National Archives)

April 1942, some 45 kilometres west of Gazala – handsome study of PzKpfw III in use as a command staff vehicle, laagered up and camouflaged with camel thorn. It bears the name 'Bestie'. Immediately behind the tank is a tent made from camouflaged shelter-quarters. (US National Archives)

May/June 1941

Reinforced with 238 tanks and 43 fighters by a daring convoy through the Mediterranean to Alexandria in mid-May, Wavell was pressured to mount a relief operation towards Tobruk. On 15 June he launched Operation 'Battleaxe', a drive by 13 Corps on the frontier positions. Near the coast 4th Indian Division was to attack Halfaya ('Hellfire') Pass frontally. On their desert flank 7th Armoured Division's 4th Armoured Brigade, with 22nd Guards Brigade, would strike through to Capuzzo and Musaid, pressing east towards Sollum and taking Halfaya in the rear. Further west the 7th Armoured Brigade and a support group, made up of the remainder of 7th Armoured Division, would advance through Sidi Suleiman and Sidi Omar, turning the desert flank of the Axis line and bringing the Panzers to battle. 7th Armoured Division took Capuzzo and Musaid and inflicted losses on 15th Panzer Division; but the savage fighting at Halfaya Pass ended in the repulse of the British, thanks to the heroism of Major Bach's I/Infantry Regiment 104 and Major Pardi's Italian gunners. At the extreme west of the Axis line a German Oasis Company (Nr. 1) under Leutnant Paulewicz and a single 88mm battery under Leutnant Ziemer successfully held the tiny Point 208, and prevented the turning of the flank. On 16 June Rommel halted the enemy advance, and gathered his own mobile forces for a counter-attack. He swung wide through the desert and then struck east through Sidi Omar, in a huge hooking manoeuvre into the British western flank which threatened to catch 13 Corps in a pocket. The British were extricated, but only after losing 100 of the 180 tanks committed; Rommel lost 12, plus 50 damaged but recovered. By nightfall on 17 June 13 Corps was back in Egypt; and on the 21st Wavell – that dogged commander, who had been given an impossible task and denied adequate means to achieve it – was replaced by General Auchinleck.

July/October 1941

There were no major battles of movement for several months. Both sides built up their strength, hampered by the perils of sea convoy supply. Rommel was particularly hard-hit by British operations from Malta. Tobruk remained under siege, but the garrison was supplied and 'rotated' by sea.

November 1941

Auchinleck insisted on delaying his offensive towards Tobruk until he had organised a strong and well-supplied army, and in late 1941 the tide of the naval war turned in his favour. He received several fresh units, while Rommel's supplies were

30 March 1942 – an issue of lemonade to troopers of 5 Panzer-Regiment, 21. Panzer-Division. (US National Archives)

sent to the bottom in increasing proportion. (Twenty per cent of Axis supplies loaded in Italy in October were sunk en route, and in November this figure rose to an appalling sixty-two per cent.) Nevertheless Rommel planned a renewed assault on Tobruk for the period 20 November – 4 December; and to avoid orders from above to remain on the defensive he played down intelligence hints that a British offensive on the frontier was imminent. This offensive – Operation 'Crusader' – began on 18 November.

Auchinleck's forces, now designated 8th Army, were as follows: The Tobruk garrison, which was to strike at the German rear in concert with the frontier attack, comprised 70th Division, the Polish 1st Carpathian Brigade, and 32nd Army Tank Brigade. On the right flank of the offensive was 13 Corps, comprising the New Zealand and 4th Indian Divisions and 1st Army Tank Brigade. On the left flank was 30 Corps, comprising 7th Armoured and 1st South African Divisions, and 4th Armoured and 22nd Guards Brigades. In all the army had 724 tanks plus reserves of 200, and was supported by twenty-four combat squadrons in the air.

Axis forces, under purely nominal command of the Italian General Bastico, were as follows:

Gambara's Italian XX Mobile Corps comprised Ariete Armoured and Trieste Motorised Divisions, around Bir el Gubi and Bir Hakeim. Rommel's Panzergruppe Afrika comprised the DAK, and the Italian XXI Corps. The former, commanded by Cruewell, included 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions (the latter redesignated from 5th Light Division), the 90th Light Afrika Division (the number dates from slightly later, but will be used here for clarity), and the Savona Division. This formation was spread from Sidi Rezegh, south-east of Tobruk, to the Gambut and Gasr el Arid sector behind the Sollum front. Navarrini's XXI Corps comprised the Italian infantry bulk, the divisions Pavia, Brescia, Trento and Bologna. It was stationed south and west of Tobruk for the planned attack on that port which was pre-empted by the opening of 'Crusader'. Total tank strength was 438 – 189 Italian and 249 German. The Italian M-tanks were of doubtful quality, however; and the German total included 69 PzKpfw IIs, which were little better. There were 136 PzKpfw IIIs, half of them fitted with the new 50mm gun, and 31 PzKpfw IVs with 75mm guns.

Under Auchinleck, the Commander-in-Chief Middle East, was General Cunningham as commander of 8th Army. His plan was for 30 Corps to strike across the frontier to Gabr Saleh, in the expectation of drawing the DAK's tanks into a battle in that sector, in which they would be destroyed. Meanwhile 13 Corps would attack the coastal area and capture Sollum, Capuzzo and Sidi Omar. On the command the Tobruk garrison would break out and eventually rendezvous with 30 Corps around Sidi Rezegh, while 13 Corps pushed on up the coastal flank. The plan was weakened, in advance, by the removal of 4th Armoured Brigade from 7th Armoured Division – the vital spearhead of the attack upon which all depended and its deployment as an intermediate column to guard against a penetration between the boundaries of the two Corps.

On 18 November, in one of the desert's rare torrential storms, the advance began. While 13 Corps made steady progress on the right flank in heavy fighting, 30 Corps' mission failed. Although a stubborn and successful defence of Bir

el Gubi by Ariete cost 7th Armoured Division some fifty tanks, Rommel did not come south with his Panzers, but remained in the Gambut area. 30 Corps reached and took Sidi Rezegh, but on 23 November was heavily attacked there and driven back by the Panzers of DAK and the entire XXI Corps. 200 British tanks were lost, and the South Africans were roughly handled. If Rommel had continued his attacks he could have destroyed 30 Corps; but he chose this moment for an exhibition of dashing cavalry generalship more suitable to a divisional commander than an army commander – his besetting weakness. Leaving his forces without orders for four days, he took 100 tanks from 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions and made his 'dash to the wire'. He swooped south of 30 Corps and eastwards along the desert flank of the engaged forces, hoping to swing north from Sidi Omar and ravage the British rear, perhaps encircling them against the coast. In this he failed; Auchinleck was not unduly impressed, and continued with his planned operations, while the 4th Indian Division stubbornly resisted Rommel's attacks. He returned to his HQ on 27 November, by which time the battle was turning against him.

Cunningham had been badly shaken by the setbacks of the 23rd, and was replaced by Ritchie; Auchinleck himself exerted maximum pressure, and largely took over the conduct of the battle on the ground. On 26th the Tobruk garrison and the New Zealanders of 13 Corps linked up at El Duda after heavy fighting. For the next nine days a series of whirling, confused engagements took place south of Gambut, with advantage swaying first one way, then the other; but with no hope of early reinforcement Rommel was the ultimate loser in this battle of attrition. On 6 December he ordered his depleted forces to retreat westwards, leaving the unfortunate Savona to hold out as long as possible in the Sollum-Halfaya-Bardia area. They did not surrender until 17 January 1942.

December 1941

The Italian command wished to pull back only to prepared defences running through Gazala, but Rommel correctly estimated that the Axis forces could only regroup with any security if they retreated as far as El Agheila. He used every means to press his argument, and by the end of the year had carried out a skilful withdrawal to that strong line. Christmas Day saw 8th Army in Benghazi once more. They had taken 9,000 German and 23,000 Italian prisoners, and destroyed 382 tanks, during the two-month campaign; British long-range patrols and raiding parties were particularly active during the final pursuit.

April 1942 – two pioneers of an armoured unit in the front line. Note the differences between their uniforms and helmets. The Gefreiter on the right has his field cap tucked behind his shoulder-brace, and wears desert 'sneakers'. (US National Archives)

The importance of securing the lines of communication to Africa was recognised on 2 December by Hitler's appointment of Field-Marshal Kesselring of the Luftwaffe as 'Supreme Commander South'. His mission, for which he was given command of all German and Italian forces in the central Mediterranean area and strong air reinforcements, was to neutralise Malta as an Allied base for offensive operations; to win air superiority over the sea; to ensure Axis supply lines; and to interdict Allied supply lines. (His nominal authority over land forces in Africa was not exercised very actively, but in fact he proved to have a better strategic grasp than Rommel.) His air and sea forces in the Mediterranean soon achieved a remarkable turn-around in the fortunes of the supply convoys, which, coinciding as it did with the outbreak of war in the Far East and the diversion of African reinforcements to Malaya, placed Auchinleck in an unenviable position. Not only did he lose expected reinforcements, but units were actually removed from his theatre of command: 70th and 6th and 7th Australian Divisions, and four fighter squadrons. Yet he was still under pressure to push the Axis armies back to the Tunisian frontier as soon as possible.

January 1942

The Axis naval successes in the Mediterranean, and the air blitz on Malta allowed Rommel to receive a hundred per cent of the cargoes loaded in Italy in this month; these included 54 PzKpfw III and IV tanks, plus armoured cars and self-propelled guns, and two units of Italian *semoventi* self-propelled guns. Keeping his intentions secret from his own superiors, as well as his enemies, Rommel launched a surprise attack from the El Agheila line on 21 January, using his faithful 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions, plus Ariete, Trieste and Sabratha of the Italian Mobile Corps. The Italians followed the general line of the coast road while the Germans swept through the desert inland. Advancing fifty-six miles in forty-eight hours, Rommel cut the Benghazi road; he arrived outside that city on 27 January, and British 1st Armoured and 4th Indian Divisions only escaped complete encirclement and destruction at heavy cost in men and vehicles. In view of his success, Rommel was forgiven for flouting orders, and promoted Colonel-General on 1 February. The loss of the Cyrenaican 'bulge' to the Axis had far-reaching consequences at sea: British aircraft could no longer support convoys from Alexandria to Malta. For a time an Italo-German joint invasion of the island was a very real possibility. Ritchie's 8th Army now fell back to the 'Gazala line', a series of defensive positions (artificially created – there was no geographical reason for this line) west of Tobruk. There his supreme commander, Auchinleck, continued to build up his forces for three months, wisely ignoring heated instructions from London to go back on the offensive. Rommel brought his infantry up (he now commanded the Italian X and XXI Corps directly, as well as the mobile XX Corps) and prepared, in his turn, for another great push.

May–June 1942

On the evening of 26 May Rommel attacked the Gazala line. His orders were to destroy British mobile forces west of Tobruk; to capture the vital port; and then to halt. A further advance was to be dependent on the successful invasion of Malta. (Rommel had reservations about this limitation, and probably intended from the start to exploit a victory to the hilt. He was all too aware of the steadily improving British supply position, but in the event he was to overreach himself with fatal consequences.)

British forces holding the Gazala line comprised:

Gott's 13 Corps, with 1st South African Division on the coast and 50th Division some twenty miles inland, supported by 1st and 32nd Army Tank Brigades. As garrison of Tobruk, 13 Corps also commanded 2nd South African Division and 9th Indian Brigade.

Norrie's 30 Corps, with 1st Free French Brigade at Bir Hakeim and 3rd Indian Motorised Brigade extending south-eastwards from this 'hinge'. 1st and 7th Armoured Divisions were positioned each side of 'Knightsbridge', an important track junction, and 29th Indian Brigade were at Bir el Gubi. The defensive line Gazala-Bir Hakeim was fronted by a wide belt of minefields, which turned north again behind the latter position.

Rommel had under command DAK (15th and 21st Panzer, and 90th Light Divisions), and Ariete and Trieste of Italian XX Corps. His tank strength was 560, including 38 PzKpfw IV and 232 PzKpfw III. While Ritchie had about 994

April 1942 – a mortar crew of Schützen (Infanterie)-Regiment 115, 15. Panzer-Division, in the captured British positions at Segnali South, 80 kilometres west of Bir Hakeim. The soldier on the right wears the short webbing gaiters occasionally worn with ankle boots by German troops in Africa. (US National Archives)

tanks, only 160 of these were the new M3 Grant – the remainder were Matildas, Valentines, and Crusaders, all of which had their strengths but all of which were outclassed by the German mediums.

Rommel's penetration on either side of Bir Hakeim led to confused fighting. 3rd Indian Motorised Brigade was overrun and 7th Armoured Division badly beaten by 15th and 21st Panzer. Ariete was then thrown vainly but very courageously against Bir Hakeim, where it was badly mauled by Koenig's *légionnaires* and colonial troops – who were also to put up a good showing against Trieste and 90th Light. By nightfall on the 27th Rommel was being counter-attacked fiercely by 30 Corps, and his mobile units were becoming isolated and tangled in the minefields. Frontal attacks by the Italian infantry of X and XXI Corps were not attracting as much attention as he had hoped. On 28 May he managed to restore his line of communication – dangerously broken while the Panzers charged around the minefields – and drove at Got el Ualeb with his armour while covering himself against 30 Corps attacks around Knightsbridge with elements of Trieste and Pavia. Success at Got el Ualeb opened a ten-mile rift in the Allied front; Rommel reunited his scattered forces and closed the jaws of the trap on Bir Hakeim. By 2 June he had cost Ritchie 400 tanks, mostly the precious Grants, and thousands of dead and wounded. He had very nearly come to grief while isolated on the wrong side of the minefields, but as always his reactions had been faster and more imaginative than those of his dispersed enemy. Bir Hakeim held out valiantly until 10 June, when the survivors broke out successfully. On the night of the 14th the last elements of 13 Corps also disengaged and pulled back; Ritchie intended to stand before Tobruk, but with only 100 tanks left he was hustled towards the frontier.

Rommel attacked the port on 20 June with 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions and XX Italian Corps, while 90th Light and the newly arrived Littorio Armoured Division covered the remains of 8th Army. The anti-tank defences were in a poor state, the minefields were incomplete, and in four hours the tanks of 15th Panzer were raging inside the perimeter. Fierce fighting continued until the following morning, when General Klopper of 2nd South African Division surrendered the garrison: 33,000 men of his own formation, 11th Indian Brigade, 32nd Army Tank Brigade and 201st Guards Brigade, together with massive fuel and other stores. Since 27 May Rommel had taken 45,000 prisoners.

Rommel's appeal to his victorious divisions for 'one more great effort' signalled his intention of pushing ahead beyond the agreed stop-line of Halfaya Pass, despite the planned detachment of some of his units for the invasion of Malta in August. Events would show that the Italian High Command's pleas for the eradication of Malta, for the sake of the Axis supply lines to Africa, before any further advance in the desert, were entirely sensible; but Hitler, too, had become enchanted by the vision of driving Britain right out of Egypt and seizing the vital Suez Canal, and he now allowed the impetuous Rommel his head. With German tanks approaching Mersa Matruh and 8th Army in full retreat, the prize seemed worth the risk of overreaching.

July 1942

Auchinleck took over direct control from Ritchie, and began to build his defensive line from the sea to the Quattara Depression, just west of El Alamein. He received two divisions of reinforcements, and was in a position to repulse an attack in early July, as Rommel arrived and threw himself straight at the Allied line, hoping to burst it open before it could become established. So fast had he advanced from 'Hellfire Pass' that he had only 6,500 men and forty-odd tanks up with him. 90th Light was repulsed on 1 July, being reduced to some 1,500 infantry and forty guns. By mid-July Rommel had some thirty battalions of infantry available, but their average strength was only 165 men each; 15th and 21st Panzer and Ariete and Littorio only mustered fifty-eight serviceable tanks between them! Behind the Axis positions stretched 250 miles of empty desert before the first useful depot, and Allied fighter-bombers ranged over the Via Balbia like hawks. British strength continued to increase, and Auchinleck carried out a series of fierce local attacks, usually on Italian units, taking some 7,000 prisoners in the three weeks up to 22 July. Rommel's eagerness had betrayed him, and for a few days his letters had a hopeless ring about them.

August 1942

Churchill replaced Auchinleck as Commander-in-Chief Middle East with General Sir Harold Alexander; despite his fine qualities and many successes, 'the Auk' had shown consistently poor judgement in his appointment of subordinates, whom he had later had to step in and rescue. Alexander, patient, brilliant, and enormously popular, was given the simple instruction of destroying Rommel's army. His field commander was to be Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery, who was appointed on the death of the original choice, General Gott, in a plane crash. Montgomery flew out immediately, and began to study Auchinleck's dispositions before El Alamein and to pursue his very personal policy for improving 8th Army morale. Reinforcements continued to arrive, and he had been promised 300 brand new American Sherman tanks and 100 105mm. self-propelled guns – an unparalleled act of American generosity prompted by the fall of Tobruk.

September–October 1942

Rommel, still dogged by supply problems and knowing his enemy was getting stronger daily, attacked the British line on 30 August. The British positions were held by 30 Corps (9th Australian, 1st South African, and 5th Indian Divisions) and 13 Corps (New Zealand and 7th Armoured Divisions), reading from the coast southwards. Unknown to Rommel, Montgomery had strongly reinforced Alam el Halfa ridge, a feature running east-west behind the southern end of the British line, to block any typical 'Desert Fox' hooks around the left wing and up towards Alexandria; this sector was held by 44th Division and two brigades from 10th Armoured Division.

Rommel's plan called for diversionary attacks against 30 Corps by the Italian XXI Corps and

Peaked cap of an engineer captain, Italian Army European pattern. Mouse grey with black peak and strap and gold buttons, it has rank stripes – three – in gold, and the branch badge in gold on grey with a black lozenge. (Daniel Rose Collection)

Italian general's peaked cap: mouse grey crown and band, black peak and strap. Generals' silver braiding sewn directly to band; one silver stripe above it indicates brigadier-general, two stripes a divisional general, two with a gold cap-badge a general of army corps, and three a full general. The eagle badge here is silver with a red backing, the central silver cross on a red lozenge. Buttons are silver. (Daniel Rose Collection)

Infantry major's white-covered tropical peaked cap. Rank is indicated by one thin gold band above one thick; the branch badge is in gold on grey with a black lozenge, the peak and strap are black and the buttons gold. (Daniel Rose Collection)

Tropical forage cap of tenente colonello, Lancieri. Branch badge is gold bullion on black; rank patch is open gold wire 'box' with two gold stars on black backing in centre. (Daniel Rose Collection)

Italian general's forage cap in mouse grey gaberdine; tropical pattern was identical but in sand-coloured twill. Flap fastened with press studs; front badge black on red backing with white cross on red lozenge; side rank patch (full general) is of silver patterned braid with red edging, bearing three gold stars with red edging. (Daniel Rose Collection)

Other Ranks' European model forage cap, in coarse olive-green cloth with flap fastened by wooden button. Artillery badge in black on olive-green; regimental number 131 in white metal on olive-green. (Daniel Rose Collection)

his newly-arrived 164th Light Division, and on 13 Corps by the Italian X Corps. The positions of 7th Armoured Division were to be penetrated by DAK (15th and 21st Panzer) followed by the Italian XX Corps (Ariete, Littorio, Trieste and Folgore Divisions) and by 90th Light Division, which would form the pivot linked with the right wing of the Italian X Corps. This mobile spearhead would then wheel to the north some thirty miles behind 8th Army's line and head for the coast road; their communications cut, the British would stream back in disorder across the path of his armour, and suffer annihilation. The classical elegance of this plan was somewhat spoiled by Montgomery's new dispositions at Alam el Halfa, prompted by a thorough study of previous occasions on which Rommel had followed just this type of plan; and by a carefully contrived false minefield and 'soft going' map planted on Rommel by Montgomery's staff, who left it in a disabled scout-car.

Italian steel helmet, painted sand yellow over olive-green. Branch badges were sometimes stencilled on the front in black paint. (Daniel Rose Collection)

Panzergrenadiere waiting the word to attack. Note hessian helmet covers, high laced boots, MP.40 and pouches, grenades, and webbing equipment. The Unteroffizier in the foreground has dull ochre tresse round the collar of his jacket. (Imperial War Museum)

By dawn on 1 September the German penetration was in trouble. Unexpected minefields and areas of soft sand slowed the advance, and the Desert Air Force was everywhere. Instead of penetrating thirty miles, Rommel only managed ten before being halted by the artillery and dug-in tanks of 13 Corps. His attempt to storm Alam el Halfa ridge with the DAK was repulsed by 64 batteries and 300 tanks, which latter were used defensively and – on specific instructions – did not come down to fight it out with the Panzers. On DAK's left XX Corps fared no better against 7th Armoured Division, and 90th Light was repulsed by the New Zealanders. On 3 September Rommel accepted the inevitable and withdrew. Of his starting strength of 515 tanks he lost 49, together with 536 dead, 1,760 wounded and 569 missing men, and 55 guns and 395 trucks destroyed or captured. 8th Army lost a total of 1,750 men and 67 tanks; starting strength had been 712, of which 164 were Grants.

Rommel, his health deteriorating (not for the first time) went back to Germany on sick leave. He was promised heavy reinforcements, which he never received. Meanwhile General Georg Stumme presided over the construction of a defensive front before El Alamein, in readiness for

the obviously inevitable British riposte. Montgomery was now disembarking his new Shermans, and two more divisions of men, including the famous 51st Highland. Stumme's line consisted of (from north to south) Trento and 164th Light Divisions, Bologna, the Ramcke Fallschirm-Brigade, Brescia, the Folgore Parachute Division, and Pavia. In reserve behind the northern sector were 15th Panzer and Littorio; on the coast road well behind them was the army reserve, 90th Light and Trieste. The southern sector of the front line was supported by 21st Panzer and Ariete. The entire front was protected by massive minefields – some half a million mines in all, plus thousands of booby-traps – and covered by eighty-six of the deadly 88mm. anti-tank guns, and ninety-five of the almost as effective Russian 7·62cm. weapons, some thirty of them self-propelled on Czech tank chassis. The Panzerarmee had 571 field guns, of which 371 were Italian; 522 anti-tank guns of all calibres, of which 150 were Italian; 497 tanks, of which 259 were Italian; and 70 infantry battalions of which 42 were Italian. The infantry were dug in, not in a continuous front but in a system of mutually supporting positions built for all-round defence. This formidable army was, however, deathly short of fuel and ammunition, and of air support; and in October 44 per cent of Axis supplies loaded in Italy were sent to the bottom of the Mediterranean.

Montgomery's supply position was much more secure; he could muster 939 field and 1,506 anti-tank guns, 1,348 tanks and 500 armoured cars, and 86 strong battalions of infantry. Note, however, that of his apparently enormous superiority in armour only some 300 tanks – the Shermans – were truly a match for the Panzer IIIs and IVs. The Crusaders and Valentines were as vulnerable to the Panzers as the Italian M-tanks were to them; while the Grant, although more formidable, had many disadvantages which prevented its meeting the Germans on equal terms, as had been proved at Knightsbridge in May and June.

El Alamein

At 2140 hours on 23 October, Montgomery opened his attack with a fierce artillery barrage which silenced the enemy's batteries and disrupted his communications. After fifteen minutes the barrage lifted and sappers and mine-clearing tanks moved forward into the 'Devil's Gardens' which protected the Axis front line. Behind them came the infantry. The attack fell on the whole length of the Axis line, but the weight of it was in the northern sector, north of Ruweisat Ridge; the southern attacks by 13 Corps were important but basically diversionary. The attack caught the Panzerarmee by surprise: Rommel and the commanders of the Italian X and XXI Corps were all absent in Europe. It was also entirely different in nature from anything yet seen in the desert. Montgomery had decided that rather than follow the classic pattern of a southern hook, with its predictable attempt to force the enemy against the coast, he would attack in the north, using the empty wastes to the south as the 'sea' into which the enemy would try to avoid being pushed. He also abandoned the desert philosophy that demanded an early clash of armour, in the belief that once the enemy's mobile forces were destroyed his infantry were helpless; recognizing the significance of previous encounters with the better-trained and technically superior Axis armour, he held his tanks back and attacked in a set-piece manner with carefully co-ordinated infantry and artillery forces. Using his superiority in numbers, he intended to crumble the Axis infantry line division by division, accepting casualties but forcing Rommel to commit his armour – his only reserves – under circumstances which robbed them of freedom of movement. Once forced to move into a congested battlefield among the minefields and to face artillery and limited defensively-sited armour, the Panzers could be destroyed steadily without ever meeting the bulk of the British armour. In the event this is exactly what happened.

The initial attack of 13 Corps in the south led to costly fighting and prevented Rommel's southern reserve, Ariete and 21st Panzer, from moving north. Meanwhile 30 Corps, led by the 9th Australian, 51st Highland and New Zealand Divisions, blasted their way along two corridors in the minefields and engaged Trento and 164th Light, causing heavy losses. 1st and 10th Armoured Divisions were committed to close support of the advance, but under tight control. When

90th Light, 15th Panzer and Littorio were committed to counter-attacks the tank losses on both sides were heavy, but the Panzerarmee's were relatively the more grievous in view of their supply position. When Rommel got back to his headquarters late on 26 October he found that only 39 German and 69 Italian tanks remained serviceable in his northern armoured reserve. He was forced to bring 21st Panzer up north of Ruweisat, and forty-eight hours later it was down to 48 tanks. Its transfer also left Montgomery free to bring 7th Armoured Division north as well. By 29th October the 1st South African and 4th Indian Divisions, forming the left (southern) flank of 30 Corps immediately north of Ruweisat, had made a deep penetration into Bologna Division's sector. Montgomery was able to regroup some brigades in preparation for the major breakthrough attempt, while still hammering Rommel's line and forcing the redeployment of Ariete and Trieste, Rommel's final reserves. Resisting pressure from Whitehall, Montgomery continued to fight his planned battle calmly and without deviation.

On 2 November the breakthrough stage of the attack, 'Operation Supercharge', was unleashed. The previous night 9th Armoured Brigade of Freyberg's New Zealand Division made a very gallant attack on part of the Axis gun-line, and was virtually wiped out. 2nd and 8th Armoured Brigades moved into the gap hacked at such cost by the 9th, and invited attack by 21st Panzer. Near Tel el Aqqaqir a tank and artillery battle of unprecedented savagery was fought out, and on 2 November some 77 German and 40 Italian tanks were destroyed, together with many guns. While relative stalemate apparently persisted 'on the map', Montgomery's plan was working all too well. Rommel's reserves, and thus his options, were being whittled away; he had only about 187 tanks left, of which only about 32 were German.

Rommel ordered immediate preparations for a withdrawal to the Fuka line sixty miles westwards, covered by Ariete. The next day he received Hitler's 'fight to the last man' directive; suicidal though it was, he dutifully cancelled his order and prepared a compromise plan by which 90th Light and the Italian infantry remained in their positions while the survivors of Afrika Korps and Italian XX Corps pulled back a few miles. On the night of the 3rd/4th, 51st Highland Division smashed through the Axis line in the area of Tel el Aqqaqir, and the New Zealand and 7th Armoured Divisions poured through the gap on the 4th. Ariete and the rest of XX Corps were destroyed where they stood, after gallant resistance which belies – as do so many of the desert battles – the Allied 'propaganda image' of the Italian soldier. On that day DAK commander General Ritter von Thoma was captured, as he leapt from his burning tank, by 1st Armoured Division. The battle was over; parts of Trieste and Littorio and the four DAK divisions were pulled back successfully, but were only skeletons of their former strength. Trento, Bologna, Brescia and Pavia were stranded without transport and 'went into the bag'; Ramcke's paratroopers made their epic escape, but the Folgore was not so fortunate. Axis losses were 25,000 dead and wounded and 30,000 prisoners; 1,000 guns and 320 tanks destroyed or captured; and nine generals. (General Stumme had died of a heart attack in the early stages, his place being taken by von Thoma.) Allied losses were 4,610 dead and missing and 8,950 wounded. Some 500 tanks had been knocked out, but as the Allies were left in command of the battlefield many were salvaged and only 150 were totally destroyed. About 110 guns, mostly anti-tank guns, had been lost.

November–December 1942

Rommel, whose belief in any eventual victory in Africa had now completely evaporated, led a skilful but desperate retreat westwards, pursued by 8th Army and overshadowed by news of the Anglo-American 'Torch' landings in Morocco and Algeria. Covering 700 miles in five weeks, Montgomery reached Marsa Brega by 13 December. Now 8th Army began to suffer from the problems of over-extended supply lines; but Rommel had no heart for delaying manoeuvres. He wanted to get the remnants of his army back to Tunis, which was being reinforced from Sicily as a bridgehead, and eventually to take them safely home to Europe. The Anglo-American eastwards advance from Algeria on Tunis was held up by the weather and by logistic problems, as well as by political quarrels. By 31 December the Axis build-up had brought total strength in

Tunisia to 47,000 German and 18,000 Italian troops of 5 Panzerarmee, led by General von Arnim. Main units were the excellent 10th Panzer Division, 334th Infantry Division, the Italian Superga Division, and various miscellaneous units of both nationalities, including German paratroopers and a battalion (501st) of the new Tiger super-heavy tanks. A temporary Axis air superiority had also been achieved over the bridgehead.

January–February 1943

By 26 January Rommel was on the Mareth line in Tunisia, with the remnants of DAK (15th and 21st Panzer and 90th and 164th Light Divisions); reinforced elements of Pistoia and Trieste; and weak new Italian forces designated the Young Fascist, Spezia and Centauro Divisions, of which the latter was nominally armoured and contained some surviving units of Ariete. On 23 February this whole force was redesignated 1st Italian Army and put under the command of the Italian General Messe; simultaneously Rommel took command of all Axis forces in the theatre – i.e. 1st Italian Army and 5th Panzer Army – the unified command being entitled Heeresgruppe Afrika.

On 14 February Rommel launched his last offensive, planning to exploit the inexperience of the American forces to the west while Montgomery probed cautiously at the Mareth line in the south. Striking the unsuspecting U.S. 1st Armoured Division in the Faid Pass, von Arnim, with 10th and 21st Panzer, inflicted very heavy losses in the Sidi bou Zid area. He beat off a counter-attack on the 15th, and the Americans abandoned Gafsa. Rommel now struck into their right flank with minor units of DAK, and on 17 February 10th and 21st Panzer were transferred to his command for an attack towards Tebessa. On the 20th the Panzers took Kasserine Pass, and next day 10th Panzer was wheeled north to take Thala, while 21st Panzer headed for Sbiba. This line of advance was forced on a reluctant Rommel by his superiors; he pressed for a drive on Tebessa in the old Wagnerian Panzer manner, correctly predicting that the Thala line would bring him into contact with strong Allied reserves. It did; and the attack petered out for lack of resources. On 22 February Rommel abandoned the attempt and dashed southwards again to face Montgomery, leaving von Arnim to launch 'Operation Oxhead', an attack on 26 February designed to cut Eisenhower's Beja-Medjez el Bab supply road and win some elbow-room. The Faid–Sidi bou Zid – Kasserine operations had cost the American II Corps about 3,000 dead and wounded, 4,000 captured, 235 tanks and 110 other armoured vehicles. It had the beneficial result of leading to the immediate replacement of the corps commander by General George S. Patton.

Italian officer's tropical service dress, worn here by a major, apparently of the 12th 'Sassari' Infantry Division to judge by his halved white-over-red collar patches. (This unit did not serve in Africa – the photo was taken in Sicily.) (Imperial War Museum)

March 1943

On 6 March Rommel opened an audacious but predictable attack on 8th Army. While 1st Italian Army (Young Fascist, Spezia, Trieste and Pistoia Divisions, plus 90th and 164th Light Divisions) occupied the Mareth Line, they were faced only by the advance forces of 8th Army – the 51st Highland and 7th Armoured Divisions. Rommel determined to hook his 10th, 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions to Medenine and then north to the sea, supported by 164th Light. Montgomery reacted instantly to the threat, bringing up heavy reinforcements and much artillery,

built around the New Zealand Division, to the short east/west line Metameur-Medenine, right across Rommel's path. In bloody fighting the Axis attack was repulsed, with a loss of 52 of Rommel's 141 precious tanks and 640 men. British losses were one Sherman tank and 130 men; the artillery had played a major part in the defence.

On 9 March Generalfeldmarschal Erwin Rommel left Africa. He flew to Rome, and then on to Germany to beg for an organised evacuation of German forces in Tunisia. Hitler refused, and ordered him to take his long-postponed sick leave. He never returned to the desert.

Under the command of von Arnim the German forces in Tunisia, strengthened only with various 'scratch' formations of variable quality and starved of equipment, fought on against impossible odds until 12 May. On that day von Arnim surrendered; on the 13th the last unit to lay down its arms, the 164th Light Division, ceased fire.

PANZERARMEE AFRIKA ORDER OF BATTLE 15 AUGUST 1942

Deutsches Afrika-Korps (Generalleutnant Walther Nehring).

15 Panzer-Division (Generalleutnant Gustav von Vaerst)

Panzer-Regiment 8, Infanterie-Regiment (mot) 115, Artillerie-Regiment (mot) 33, Panzerjäger-Abteilung (mot) 33, Aufklärungs-Abteilung (mot) 33, plus divisional units.

21 Panzer-Division (Generalmajor Georg von Bismarck)

Panzer-Regiment 5, Infanterie-Regiment (mot) 104, Artillerie-Regiment (mot) 155, Panzerjäger-Abteilung (mot) 39, Aufklärungs-Abteilung (mot) 3, plus divisional units.

90 leichte Afrika-Division (Generalmajor Ulrich Kleeman)

Infanterie-Regiment (mot) 155, Infanterie-Regiment (mot) 200, Infanterie-Regiment Afrika (mot) 361, Panzergrenadier-Regiment (mot) Afrika*, Artillerie-Regiment (mot) 190, Panzerjäger-Abteilung (mot) 190, Aufklärungs-Abteilung (mot) 580, plus divisional units.

164 leichte Afrika-Division (Oberst Carl-Hans Lungerhausen)

Panzergrenadier-Regiment (mot) 125, Panzergrenadier-Regiment (mot) 382, Panzergrenadier-Regiment (mot) 433, Artillerie-Regiment (mot) 220, Flak-Abteilung (mot) 609, schwerste Infanteriegeschütz-Kompanien 707 and 708, Aufklärungs-Abteilung (mot) 220, plus divisional units.

Fallschirmjäger-Brigade Ramcke (Generalmajor Bernhard Ramcke)

Fallschirmjäger-Bataillon Kroh, Fallschirmjäger-Bataillon von der Heydte, Fallschirmjäger-Bataillon Hübner, Fallschirmjäger-Lehrbataillon Burkhardt, Fallschirm-Artillerie-Abteilung, Fallschirm-Panzerjäger-Kompanie.

X Italian Corps (Lieutenant General Eduardo Nebbia)

Infantry Division Brescia (Major General Brunetti)

19th and 20th Infantry Regiments, 1st Motorised Artillery Regiment.

Infantry Division Pavia (Brigadier General Scattaglia)

27th and 28th Infantry Regiments, 26th Artillery Regiment.

XX Italian Motorised Corps (Lieutenant General Giuseppe de Stefanis)

Armoured Division Ariete (Brigadier General Arena)

Armoured Group Ariete (52nd Tank Battalion, plus 3rd Nizza Armoured Group comprising armoured Bersaglieri battalion with AA and AT batteries), 132nd Tank Regiment (8th, 9th and 10th Tank Battalions), 8th Bersaglieri Regiment (2nd Motorcycle Battalion, 5th and 12th Motorised Battalions), 132nd Armoured Artillery Regiment (1st and 2nd 75/27 Groups, 3rd 105/28 Group, 551st and 552nd 75/18 Armoured Groups), 4th Granatieri di Sardegna Anti-Tank Battalion, plus divisional units.

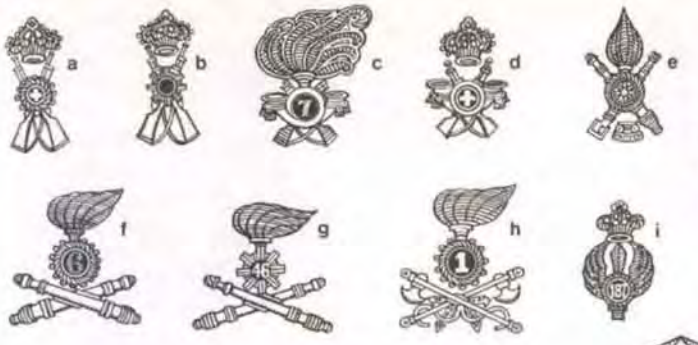
Armoured Division Littorio (Brigadier General Mayneri)

3rd Lancieri di Novara Armoured Cavalry Group, 133rd Tank Regiment (4th, 12th and 51st Tank Battalions), 12th Bersaglieri Regiment (21st Motorcycle Battalion, 23rd and 36th Motorised Battalions), 133rd Armoured Artillery Regiment (1st and 2nd 75/27 Groups, 556th and 557th 75/18 Armoured Groups), part of 3rd Armoured Artillery Regiment, plus divisional units. (NB: many of the above units had suffered heavy casualties and this official establishment does not reflect the true strength of the division.)

Motorised Infantry Division Trieste (Brigadier General La Ferla)

11th Tank Battalion, 65th and 66th Infantry Regiments, 9th Bersaglieri Regiment (30th, 32nd and 38th Motorised Battalions), 21st Artillery Regiment (1st and 2nd 100/17 Groups, 3rd and 4th

*Formerly Sonderverband 288, consisting of two battalions of ethnic Germans from Africa and the Mediterranean area, and one battalion of local Arabs.



Italian branch cap badges, repeated on officers' black shoulder-boards: (a) infantry (b) motorised infantry (c) Bersaglieri (d) colonial infantry (e) tanks (f) divisional artillery (g) motorised (armoured) artillery (h) sappers (i) paratroopers.

Typical divisional arm-shields – 'Sirte', 'Trento', and '23 Marzo'. See commentaries on colour plates A2 and B2 for details.

75/27 Groups, 5th 75/50 Group), plus divisional units.

Parachute Division Folgore (Major General Frattini)
185th, 186th and 187th Parachute Infantry Regiments, plus divisional units of uncertain strength.

XXI Italian Corps (Lieutenant General Enea Navarini)
Motorised Infantry Division Trento (Brigadier General Masina)
61st and 62nd Infantry Regiments, 7th Bersaglieri Regiment (battalions uncertain at this stage), 46th Artillery Regiment (equipment uncertain at this stage), plus divisional units.
Infantry Division Bologna (Major General Gloria)
39th and 40th Infantry Regiments, 205th Artillery Regiment (equipment uncertain at this stage), plus divisional units.

Individual units under army commanded included scores of specialist battalions and companies, but the most important combat units included:

Panzerjäger-Abteilung (mot) 605
Luftwaffe Flak-Abteilungen (mot) 606, 612, 617, and 135.
Artilleriekommando 104, comprising:
Staff Artillery Regiment 221; staff, 2 and 3 Batteries Artillerie Abteilung 408; staff, 2 and 3 Batteries Artillerie Abteilung 528; Artillerie-Abteilung 364; staff I Battalion, and 4, 5 and 6 Batteries Artillery Regiment 115; 4 Battery, Army Coast Artillery Battalion 149.

PANZER-ARMEEOBERKOMMANDO 5 ORDER OF BATTLE 1 MARCH 1943

10 Panzer-Division (Generalmajor Fritz Freiherr von Broich)
Panzer-Regiment 7 (one battalion), Panzergrenadier-Regiment 69 (one battalion), Panzergrenadier-Regiment 86 (one battalion), part Artillerie-Regiment (mot) 90, Panzerjäger-Abteilung (mot) 90, Kradschützen-Btl 10, plus divisional units.

21 Panzer-Division (Oberst Hans-Georg Hildebrandt)
Panzer-Regiment 5, Panzergrenadier-Regiment 104, Artillerie-Regiment (mot) 155, 2./Flak-Abteilung 25, Aufklärungs-Abteilung 580, plus divisional units.

334 Infanterie-Division (Generalmajor Friedrich Weber)
Grenadier-Regiment 754, Grenadier-Regiment 755, Grenadier-Regiment 756, Artillerie-Regiment (mot) 334, schnelle Abteilung 334, plus divisional units.

Division von Manteuffel (Generalmajor Hasso von Manteuffel)
Fallschirmjäger-Regiment Barenthin, Feld-Abteilung T3, Marsch-Abteilung A30, IV/Artillerie-Regiment (mot) 2, Fallschirmjäger-Pionier Battalion (mot) 11, Italian 10th Bersaglieri Regiment (26th, 34th and 63rd Battalions) plus minor divisional units.

Infantry Division Superga (General Lorenzelli)
91st and 92nd Infantry Regiments, 5th Tank Battalion, 553rd 75/18 Armoured Artillery Group, 5th Artillery Regiment (1st and 2nd 75/18 Groups, 65th 100/17 Group), plus divisional units.

Most Italian infantry units wore collar patches of one of these three designs; a few – e.g. the Liguria Brigade – wore patches halved along their length. Representative designs worn by units which served in North Africa are as follows:

Cirene Division, Liguria Brigade, (157 & 158 Rgts.) – halved orange over blue
Sirte Div., Ancona Brig., (69 & 70 Rgts.) – black, three yellow stripes
Savona Div., Savona Brig., (15 & 16 Rgts.) – white, one black stripe
Sabratha Div., Verona Brig., (85 & 86 Rgts.) – blue, two yellow stripes
Superga Div., Basilicata Brig., (91 & 92 Rgts.) – crimson, one white stripe
Brescia Div., Brescia Brig., (19 & 20 Rgts.) – crimson, one black stripe
Pavia Div., Pavia Brig., (27 & 28 Rgts.) – green, one red stripe
Trento Div.,* Sicilia Brig., (61 & 62 Rgts.) – scarlet, two green stripes, blue patch
Trieste Div.,* Valtellina Brig., (65 & 66 Rgts.) – black, three white stripes, blue patch
Bologna Div., Bologna Brig., (39 & 40 Rgts.) – white, one red stripe
Pistoia Div., Pistoia Brig., (35 & 36 Rgts.) – orange, one black stripe.

* See commentary on colour plate C1 for details of motorised infantry insignia.

Brigade Imperiali (General Imperiali)

About six battalions of infantry, Bersaglieri, Carabinieri, Blackshirts, etc., assembled from fragments and from recent arrivals from Italy, supported by the Lodi Armoured Regiment, the 15th Tank Battalion, and the 558th Armoured Artillery Group.

19th and 20th Flak-Divisions

With three Flak-Regiments and three detached groups.

Under direct Army command were a bewildering number of 'battle-groups' or *Kampfgruppen*. Some were sub-units of regiments or divisions which had been split up to spread their strength or to perform some specific task; some were chance assemblies of surviving companies from various units; some were assembled from reinforcements arriving piecemeal from Italy. Most were known by their commanders' names. It would be pointless to list them here; the subject is very fully covered by Bender. However, there were two major units under Army command which should be recorded: the Tiger tank battalion schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501, and Kampfgruppe Schmid. The latter represented a goulash of exhausted remnants, dispersed reinforcements, and the newly arrived sub-units of the Hermann Göring field division of the Luftwaffe. Shortly after 1 March further HG units arrived and the division was reorganised, although retaining some of the various Army sub-units listed below. At the beginning of the month the main components were a company of II/Panzer-Regiment 7, I/Panzergrenadier-Regiment 69, II/Jäger-Regiment Hermann Göring, Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 756, Bataillon Mickley, Afrika-Bataillon 33, I Panzer-Artillerie-Regiment 90, II/Artillerie-Regiment 190, and elements of Pionier-Bataillon 334 and the second battalion of Italian Infantry Regiment 92.

NB. In the listings above there has deliberately been no attempt to follow any artificially consistent style. German units are quoted in the form of the German-language source, and Italian units in the form of the English language source; thus the mixture of spelling conventions.

African Service of German Divisions

(Intended as a guide to title, arrival and surrender dates only – see chronology for details of involvement in specific engagements.)

5 leichte Division was the title chosen for the 'blocking force' sent to Africa in early 1941. Most of its units were in fact drawn from 3 Panzer-Division. The units arrived in Tripoli from 14 February 1941 onwards, the armour disembarking on 20 February. After continuous active service as the spearhead of the DAK the division was redesignated on 1 October 1941 as 21 Panzer-Division (see below).

10 Panzer-Division were veterans of Poland, France, and Russia, and after a period in the south of France were shipped to Tunisia in late November 1942, being immediately committed to battle in the bridgehead. As the freshest and best-equipped division available it was used constantly, at both ends of the bridgehead, until it was forced to surrender in the hills north of Bizerta on 9 May 1943.

15 Panzer-Division was born on 1 November 1940, when it was re-formed as a Panzer formation after serving in France as the 33 Infanterie-Division. Arriving in Africa from late April to mid-June 1941, some of its elements were rushed immediately to the front line outside Tobruk and took part in attacks on the port on 30 April. Heavily engaged in the 'Battleaxe' battles, and thereafter constantly in action as part of DAK's armoured spearhead, participating in all major engagements until 9 May 1943 when it surrendered in the northern Tunisian pocket.

21 Panzer-Division was formed from 5 leichte Division on 1 October 1941, and thereafter served with 15

1

2

3

1 Sergente Libico, IIIrd Libyan Battalion, 1940

2 Vice Capo Squadra, M.V.S.N. 1st Division '23 Marzo', 1940

3 Bersagliere Motor-cyclist, 1941

1 Private, Liguria Brigade, 63rd 'Cirene' Infantry Division, 1941

2 Caporale, Ancona Brigade, 61st 'Sirte' Infantry Division, 1941

3 Tenente Colonello, Motorised Artillery, 1941

1 Tenente, Sicilia Brigade, 102nd 'Trento' Motorised Infantry Division, 1942

2 Sergente Maggiore, 'Folgore' Parachute Division, 1942

3 Private, 'Giovani Fascisti' Division, 1942–43

1 Generale di Brigata, 1941–43

2 General der Panzertruppe Erwin Rommel, 1942

3 Major, Panzer Division Staff, 1941–42

1 Obergefreiter, Aufklärungs-Abteiling (Mot.) 3, 1941

2 Signals mechanic, Transport Workshop, 1942

3 Feldwebel, Feldgendarmerie, 1942

1 Unteroffizier, Panzergrenadiere, 1942

2 Gefreiter, Infanterie, 1943

3 Schütze, Infanterie, 1942–43

1 Oberleutnant, Artillerie, 1941–43

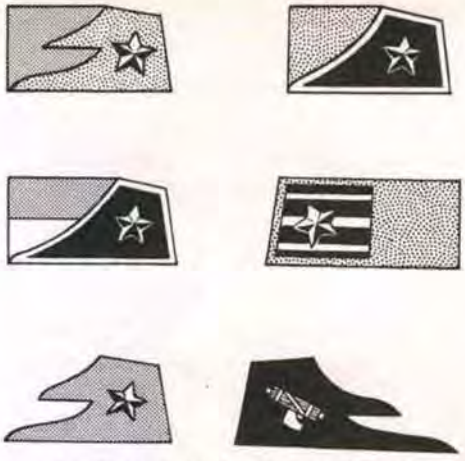
2 Panzerschütze, 1941–43

3 Tenente, Italian tank regiments, 1941–43

1 Unteroffizier, Luftwaffe Flak-artillerie, 1941–42

2 Hauptmann, Luftwaffe Flak-artillerie, 1942–43

3 Unteroffizier, Luftwaffe Ramcke Parachute Brigade, 1942–43



Italian collar patches and 'flames': *top left*, tank troops – red flames on blue patch; *top right*, motorised artillery – black flame outlined yellow on blue patch; *centre left*, divisional artillery – black flame outlined yellow on green-over-yellow patch; *centre right*, example of motorised infantry – half brigade patch on blue backing patch; *bottom left*, Bersaglieri – crimson flames; *bottom right*, MVSN – gold fascis on black flames. All stars white.

Officers' shoulder-boards, in black cloth for wear on tropical uniform. (a) Infantry colonel – red outer piping, gold inner braid, gold branch badge and rank stars. (b) Tank lieutenant – blue outer piping, no inner braid, gold branch badge and stars. Insignia of various ranks are described in the colour plate commentaries. Majors' and second lieutenants' single stars were placed centrally below the branch badge; triple stars of captains and colonels were arranged in a triangle, with one centrally inboard of a row of two. Photos show branch badges sometimes with a grey backing patch.

Paratroopers' 'collar' patch of 1942 – silver star and sword blade, gold hilt and wing, on blue patch.

Pz-Division as the vital armoured striking-force of Rommel's army. It was committed to every major series of engagements from the 'Crusader' battles of November 1941 to the last surrender in Tunisia on 13 May 1943.

90 leichte Afrika-Division served in the desert as *Afrika-Division z.b.V.* ('z.b.V.' = for special duties) from August 1941 until November, when it became 90 leichte Division; it was formed from various independent units already in Africa, plus reinforcements which arrived piecemeal. It fought at Tobruk in November 1941, in the Gazala and Bir Hakeim battles of spring 1942 (having received the definitive version of its title in March), before the Alamein line in July, at Alam el Halfa and Alamein, as a rear-guard in Tunisia, and finally surrendered on 12 May 1943 near Enfidaville.

164 leichte Afrika-Division formed in November 1939 as 164 Lehr-Infanterie-Division, fought in Greece in summer 1941, served as garrison troops in Crete for a time, and, arrived in Africa early in July 1942. It received its final title shortly afterwards, first seeing action in a raid on Australian positions before Alamein. It was heavily engaged at Alamein, refitted and motorised by January 1943, and fought at Mareth and Wadi Akarit before surrendering on 13 May.

334 Infanterie-Division formed in autumn 1942 in Germany; the division arrived in Africa from late December onwards and was assigned to Pz.AOK 5 in Tunisia. It fought continually until inevitable surrender on 8 May, and among the positions it defended was 'Longstop Hill'. It was eventually surrounded by British forces in the hills between Mateur and Tebourba.

999 leichte Afrika-Division was created by a stroke of the pen late in 1942 (originally as a brigade) from court-martialled German soldiers, officered and led at NCO level by hand-picked personnel. Redesignated as a division in March 1943, it sent two regiments to Tunis in March/April – Afrika-Schützen-Regiment (mot) 961 and 962. Attached to various combat groups, these regiments fought with distinction; joined by some divisional units later in April, they were attached to DAK at the time of the final surrender.

Division von Broich/von Manteuffel was an *ad hoc* formation formed from all units in the Bizerta bridge-head on 18 November 1942, fighting in northern Tunisia under Pz. AOK 5 and becoming Division von Manteuffel on 7 February 1943 when Oberst von Broich was transferred to 10 Pz-Div. Including Luftwaffe paratroopers, Italian Bersaglieri and German Army soldiers, it was finally forced to surrender on 9 May.

Division Hermann Göring was the Luftwaffe's premier field division. Elements were sent into the Tunis bridge-head from November 1942 onwards, being attached to commands which most needed them. By early March most of the division had arrived, and this assembly of units was termed Kampfgruppe Schmid, Vorkommando Division 'HG' and fought with determination on the southern perimeter of the bridge-head. On 12 May all but a very few survivors surrendered,

Faded olive-green cloth covered the cork construction of the first pattern German sun-helmet; the crown was lined scarlet, and the brim baize green. Pin-back metal badges echoed the design of decals worn on the steel helmet; the strap was brown. The later brown felt version was not much used (*right*). (Author's Collection)

these few escaping to Sicily by air. The division was rebuilt very quickly in France and Italy, fighting again during the Allied invasion of Sicily.

The Plates

A1 Sergente Libico, IIIrd Libyan Battalion, 1940

In 1939 the Libyan native battalions, previously termed Colonial Rifles in common with similar units elsewhere in Italy's overseas possessions, were redesignated as specifically 'Libyan Battalions', as a mark of honour. At the same time the non-commissioned ranks were renamed. Previously these had reflected the old Turkish-style ranks traditional in North Africa (Muntaz, Bashi-bazuk, etc.); for the few remaining years of their existence the standard Italian ranks were used with the suffix 'Libico'. The two divisions of Libyan troops which served under General Berti's 10th Army in late 1940 – Sibille's 1st and Pescatori's 2nd Libyan Divisions – put up a determined resistance to O'Connor's 13 Corps during the British counter-offensive of December; they were virtually wiped out at Maktila and Tummar by Selbyforce and the 4th Indian Division respectively.

This senior NCO is taken from a plate by Del Giudice. The low red fez bearing the Colonial Rifles badge was common to all battalions, but the colour of the tassel and the sash is said to have varied from battalion to battalion. No clear tabulation of these colours has emerged, however. This mauve-sashed NCO shares the pages of Del Giudice's work with another soldier, also captioned 'IIIrd Battalion', who wears bright blue distinctions. The characteristic slip-on rank badges on the arms bore red chevrons for junior, and silver for senior NCOs. The single thick chevron with a thin chevron below it identifies a *sergente*; the three silver stars are long-service badges, indicating in this case sixteen years' service. The stars on the stand-up collar of the khaki drill tunic are a national rather than a rank insignia – the star has been the traditional collar insignia of the Italian Army throughout this century. The medal ribbon is that of the Colonial Troops' Long Service Medal. Rank and file are believed to have worn hide sandals in place of ankle boots. Weapons and equipment were largely obsolete; the bulk of the infantry were armed with the old 1891 Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, a long weapon firing under-powered 6·5mm. ammunition.

Some small units of these troops were still in action in April 1943 in Tunisia, notably in Mannerini's 'Sahara Group' under 1st Italian Army.

A2 Vice Capo Squadra, M.V.S.N. 1st Division '23 Marzo', 1940

The 'Blackshirt' Divisions were assembled from the Legions of the Fascist Party Militia, the Milizia Volontaria Sicurezza Nationale or M.V.S.N. These legions were recruited from specific areas, as the M.V.S.N. was territorial in concept. Rosignoli quotes the following units and ranks, with army equivalents:

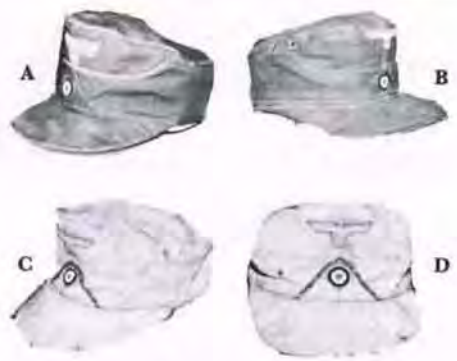
Division – *Zona*
Brigade – *Gruppo*
Regiment – *Legione*
Battalion – *Coorte*
Company – *Centuria*
Platoon – *Manipolo*
Section – *Squadra*
Logotenente Generale – Major-General
Console Generale – Brigadier
Console – Colonel
Seniore – Major
Centurione – Captain
Capo Manipolo – Lieutenant
Capo Squadra – Sergeant
Vice Capo Squadra – Corporal
Camicia Nera Scelta – Senior private
Camicia Nera ('Blackshirt') – Private

The personnel were conscripted, from December 1930 onwards, from the Fascist Youth organisation. After passing from the Giovani Fascisti to the membership of the Party proper at

the age of twenty-one, a youth who did not join the army that year was recruited into the M.V.S.N. In 1939 the M.V.S.N. Legion was made up of two battalions; one of young Blackshirts aged between twenty-one and thirty-six, the other of Territorials up to fifty-five years of age. Two legions and an artillery regiment formed a Blackshirt Division. All units tended to be under strength but average peacetime establishment was 650 rank and file and twenty officers per battalion. Six divisions were raised for the Abyssinian campaign, and others for the Spanish Civil War, but by the outbreak of the Second World War only three remained in being: the 1st (23 Marzo), the 2nd (28 Ottobre), and the 4th (3 Gennaio). (Like the Nazi Party, and like revolutionary groups to this day, the Fascists commemorated in their unit titles days of great significance in their official history – or perhaps, mythology would be the more accurate term.) All three were based in Libya in late 1940; the 23 Marzo served under General 'Electric Whiskers' Bergonzoli's XXIII Corps in the Italian 5th Army. It was the first unit into Sidi Barrani on 16 September 1940, but was annihilated at the capture of Bardia by the 6th Australian Division on 3–5 January 1941.

Uniformity of dress was not noticeable in any of the desert armies, and the Italians were no exception. This figure, based largely on a Del Giudice plate, displays one major departure from the standard Army tropical dress which was the regulation for Blackshirt units. The tropical tunic has been replaced by a *sahariana*, a popular form of bush-jacket which was used by all ranks of the Italian forces in Africa with a surprising degree of freedom; it was particularly favoured by officers, and by all ranks of the Fascist militia. Its characteristics are the single falling collar, often worn open at the neck, and the caped effect on the chest. The M.V.S.N. legions in Africa all wore that organisation's special collar badges: a double black 'flame' bearing a gold fascis in place of the Army star. The fascis in brass, above a battalion or legion number within a circle, was the regulation cap badge, and was sometimes applied to the sun-helmet. The NCOs wore chevrons of conventional Italian Army design on each upper arm, but in red and silver for junior and senior ranks respectively, in place of the black and gold of the Army. This corporal has two thin red chevrons and one thick; sergeants wore one thick over one thin silver, and senior privates one thick over one thin red. Above the chevrons on the left arm appears the pinned-on metal divisional badge, in black and gold. These were not generally worn in the front line. The basic design is simply an adaptation of the Army equivalent; these formation badges appeared in various versions, in metal and cloth alike, and there seems to have been no firm regulation as to their use. Drawings of these badges accompany the text. The dagger worn on the left front of the belt was a feature of M.V.S.N. and Young Fascist units; it seems to have been retained even when full combat harness was worn, immediately between the bayonet scabbard and the ammunition pouches.

The 23 Marzo comprised the 102nd and 233rd



Examples of the famous tropical field cap of the German forces in Africa and the Mediterranean; the colour varied from olive-green through all shades of brown to pale sand yellow and off-white. Many were deliberately bleached. The turn-up was permanently sewn in place, being simply a doubled thickness of material; note the two ventilation holes on each side of the cap. The lining was scarlet. (A) is a Panzergrenadier officer's cap, stamped 1941, in tan brown with silver piping; the eagle is silver on brown, the cockade a raised black-silver-red pattern, and the soutache grass green. (B) is an Other Ranks' cap without Waffenfarbe soutache, olive drab in colour; the eagle is blue-grey on tan, and the flat black-white-red cockade is woven on a tan diamond. (C) and (D) are two views of a pale sandy drill Other Ranks' cap with blue-grey on tan eagle and black-white-red cockade on a tan diamond. The soutache is pale green, indicating a Gebirgsjäger. It is known that Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 756 fought in Tunisia in January-February 1943, and photos exist which show this type of cap being worn complete with the *Edelweiss* badge of this branch on the left side of the band. (All Biwandi Collection)

Side and front views of tropical sidecap of Army pattern – note scooped front to turn-up. Pale sandy drill, regulation badges, pink Panzer Waffenfarbe soutache. (Biwandi Collection)

Front and side views of Luftwaffe tropical side cap, differing from Army model in having a smooth, unscooped edge to the turn-up. Note Luftwaffe eagle in white or very faded blue-grey on tan triangle, and raised black-white-red cockade. These caps were not lined scarlet, unlike Army pattern. (Author's and Biwandi Collections)

Legions and the 201st Artillery; the 28 Ottobre, the 231st and 202nd Legions and the 202nd Artillery; and the 4 Gennaio the 270th and 240th Legions and the 204th Artillery.

A3 Bersagliere Motor-cyclist, 1941

These famous light troops were a separate branch of the infantry, and were attached only to armoured, motorised, and 'Celere' divisions; in the later stages of the campaign autonomous battalions were also drafted to Africa. The first regiments to arrive were the 8th and 9th Bersaglieri, with the Ariete and Trieste Divisions respectively. Each included a battalion of motor-cycle reconnaissance troops, and this figure is taken from a Del Giudice plate so identified. One of the photographs in this book includes a rear view of one of these troopers.

The sun-helmet is conventional, but the Bersagliere's traditional plume of very dark green cock's feathers has been added to the right side; this plume was worn on all headgear including the steel helmet. The branch badge is worn on the front of the sun-helmet in brass; sun goggles have been pushed to the side in the usual fashion. The drab khaki tunic is of similar cut to the usual sand-coloured tropical issue, apart from the pointed false cuffs; it is worn over an open-necked shirt. The collar flames of the whole Bersaglieri branch, in burgundy red with a silver star, are sewn in the usual place. The very pale linen trousers, loose in cut and so pale a grey-green as to be almost off-white, are tucked into high black leather gaiters with two-buckle fastening on the outside leg, worn with conventional laced ankle boots. The characteristic Italian belt and harness, unusual in that it has a brace-strap looped around the neck rather than the Y-straps adopted by most other armies, is in mid-grey leather and supports two ammunition pouches on the front centre of the belt. The aluminium canteen is slung from the left shoulder. No bayonet scabbard is worn; the weapon is the folding-bayonet carbine version of the M.91/38 6·5mm. rifle. Service dress headgear of the Bersaglieri was a red fez with a hanging blue tassel – see C3 for shape.

B1 Private, Liguria Brigade, 63rd Cirene Infantry Division, 1941

Cirene was composed of the Liguria Infantry Brigade (157th and 158th Infantry Regiments) and the 45th Artillery. It was based in the Rabia camp complex during O'Connor's push of December 1940, but although outflanked by 4th Indian Division and the Matilda tanks of 7th Royal Tank Regiment it disengaged with reasonable success when ordered to retreat to the Halfaya-Sollum-Capuzzo line. The surviving elements were shut up in Bardia on 18 December, together with the remains of the Catanzara Division and the Marmarica and 23 Marzo Divisions; O'Connor's assault of 3–5 January 1941 resulted in all these units marching into captivity – some 45,000 men in all.

The standard tropical combat uniform of the Italian infantryman is illustrated. The four-pocket tunic had straight pocket-flaps and box pleats, and was worn open-necked over a shirt and, often, a crew-necked pullover. The ugly plus-four trousers (sometimes replaced by shorts) were confined by puttees, either of khaki or of olive green; brown ankle boots completed the uniform. The steel helmet was painted sand yellow; hessian covers were sometimes used. The only insignia worn by this private are the collar patches of the Liguria Brigade, halved blue and orange with the

usual star at the foot. The grey leather belt and harness support two ammunition pouches and the bayonet for the Mannlicher-Carcano M.91/38 rifle, a 6·5mm. weapon which had a stormy birth in the late 1930s. Until that time the standard weapon of the infantry was the long 1891 Mannlicher-Carcano of similar calibre. This obsolete weapon was to be replaced by a shorter development of the basic – and sound – design, re-chambered to 7·35mm. for new and more efficient ammunition. When the re-equipment programme was already under way it was discovered that someone had blundered: industrial capacity was quite unequal to producing enough of the new ammunition in time, and the new rifle was completed to the old 6·5mm. calibre! It thus represented little advance over the elderly M.91. It was loaded with a six-round clip, the entire charger being inserted into the fixed magazine; when all six rounds had been fired the clip fell out through the large hole in the bottom of the magazine. It has been reliably reported that this hole also provided a most convenient path for the passage of sand, gravel, and venturesome desert beasts into the working parts of the rifle.

The aluminium canteen is standard Italian issue; the canvas gas-mask bag is here used as a convenient musette or haversack – a widespread practice.

B2 Caporale, Ancona Brigade, 61st Sirte Infantry Division, 1941

Photographs show that in cold weather (not unknown in North Africa) the standard Italian Army service uniform of grey-green was widely worn by all ranks. This figure, partly based on a Del Giudice plate, but with certain additions, illustrates a typical infantryman in regulation dress. The flapped sidecap is worn square on the head, and bears the branch badge in black thread or wire embroidery on the upper front – here, that of the infantry. These service quality badges were in silhouette only, lacking the detail of the full-dress gold version. The tunic is worn over a shirt and tie; it has an integral cloth belt fastened with buttons rather than a buckle. The wearing of the bayonet in the manner shown seems to have been normal with service dress. The shoulder straps are plain. The black chevrons of corporal's rank – one thick over one thin – are worn on both arms. Corporal-majors wore one thick black chevron above two thin; sergeants, one thick above one thin gold; sergeant-majors, one thick above two thin gold. The divisional badge, in yellow embroidery on red cloth, is worn on the left arm. This does not seem to have been a very widespread practice, certainly not in the fighting areas. Originally infantry units wore blue shields, and red was reserved for armoured and motorised divisions; but the classification was widened to include nine divisions which were theoretically 'autotransportable', and the picture thus becomes extremely complicated. Sirte is known to have worn a red shield, and Brescia, for instance, a blue one.

The collar patches demand some explanation. In 1815 the infantry regiments of the old Sardinian Army were brigaded in twos under the same title, and the two-regiment named brigade remained the basis of infantry organisation ever since. In 1935 divisions were created by adding a field artillery regiment to a brigade of infantry, together with service units. The infantry of each division all wore the same collar patch, which identified the brigade. From about 1940 onwards the artillery and service units of a division sewed their own collar insignia – in the form of 'flames', distinguishing the branch but not the unit – on to the division's infantry brigade patch, half of which remained visible at the top or rear of the combined insignia; thus any divisional troops can be exactly identified by their collar insignia. A representative listing of collar patch colours worn by divisions which fought in North Africa will be found elsewhere in this book; that of Sirte was the black with three yellow stripes of its Ancona Infantry Brigade, made up of the 69th and 70th Regiments. The 43rd Artillery completed the division. The star was always worn at the bottom or front of the patch. These patches were worn by all ranks of the infantry brigade, officers included.

Sirte was wiped out on 21 January 1941 at Tobruk; the division 'went into the bag' after the successful assault by 6th Australian Division supported by elements of 7th Armoured Division.

B3 Tenente Colonello, Motorised Artillery, 1941

The motorised artillery regiments were part of the

establishment of the Italian armoured divisions; they provided the support of fast towed and, eventually, armoured self-propelled guns (*semoventi*) for the hard-pressed Italian tanks. These latter were first used to any effect in Rommel's push at the El Agheila line in January 1942; they were to become one of the most useful tools in his arsenal, far superior in effectiveness to the obsolescent 'battle tanks'. The Ariete Division, the crack armoured formation, numbered the 132nd Motorised Artillery Regiment among its units, and the 133rd served with the Littorio Division.

This impeccable senior officer is dressed in the Italian Army's standard tropical service uniform for commissioned ranks, which differs in small details of tunic cut from that of the other ranks, and of course in quality. The shape of the collar is noticeably different. The uniform is worn with riding breeches, brown top boots, and a Sam Browne belt supporting the small holster for the Beretta M1934 automatic. The sand-coloured tropical weight sidecap bears the motorised artillery branch badge on the front flap, in gold embroidery on black; this flap can be turned down to make a peak. Between the flap and the button-over earpiece is an 'open box' of gold braid containing two gold stars – this is a rank insignia. The sequence was as follows: 2nd lieutenant, single star; lieutenant, two stars; 1st lieutenant, two stars over a bar; captain, three stars; 1st captain, three stars over a bar; major, one star in a box; lieutenant-colonel, two stars in a box; colonel, three stars in a box. The ranks of 1st lieutenant and 1st captain were granted automatically if an officer reached twenty years' service from his commission while still a lieutenant or captain, or twelve years' service in one of those ranks.

The collar insignia of the motorised artillery branch, a single black 'flame' piped all round in yellow with a silver star, is sewn on to a backing of the blue branch colour of the armoured divisions, which shows at the top or rear of the whole insignia. The shoulder boards, details of which are illustrated elsewhere in this book, were black when worn with the tropical uniform. These were the only indications of rank on the tunic – the sleeve badges of the European service dress were (usually) omitted. They are piped all round the edge in branch colour – here, the yellow of the artillery – and in this case have the inner edging of gold braid worn by majors and upwards. The branch badge appears in the centre in gold, and the two stars of this rank at the butt end. Medal ribbons include the blue with a silver star of the Silver Medal of Military Valour, the five black stripes on blue of the Ethiopian campaign medal, the red and white of the France 1940 campaign medal, and the black-white-red-white-green vertical stripes of the Axis Africa medal.

C1 Tenente, Sicilia Brigade, 102nd Trento Motorised Infantry Division, 1942

This junior officer, in contrast to the preceding figure, wears a typical officer's combat uniform. The breeches and top boots seem to have been discarded in place of trousers and puttees like those of the men in most cases. The sand-painted steel helmet bears on the front a black stencilled silhouette of the branch badge – a practice observed among officers and rankers alike – and the only other insignia worn are the collar patches and shoulder boards. Note the pointed false cuffs of the tunic. The tie has been replaced by a sweat-rag. The Sam Browne belt is worn, with a canvas three-section pouch for the short twenty-round magazines of the Beretta 9mm. M1938A submachine gun – considered by many to be one of the finest weapons in its class in the world, and the best of all Italian Army small arms. Magazines of 10, 20, 30 and 40 rounds capacity were manufactured.

As Trento and Trieste were motorised formations, the shoulder boards are edged in the blue piping of the armoured and motorised corps. This junior officer does not have the strip of gold braid around the inner edge of the black board, in contrast to the preceding figure. He wears the gold badge of the motorised infantry in the middle of the board, with the two gold stars of his rank at the outer end. Captains wore three stars, two in a row and the third above the gap between them, immediately below the branch badge. The Sicilia Brigade collar patch was scarlet with two light green stripes; it is worn here sewn on to a blue backing, and cut down in size, to indicate the motorised function, with the usual silver star. The Trieste infantry component was the Valtellina Brigade, whose black patch with three white

Interesting Luftwaffe group in the desert. Left and centre figures wear Italian sahariana jackets, popular with German personnel; left wears a European issue blue-grey Other Ranks' side cap, and centre has some kind of privately acquired sun-helmet with a puggaree. He also wears an Other Ranks' breast eagle still on its triangular factory backing. (Imperial War Museum)

stripes was displayed in the same way. The Sicilia comprised the 61st and 62nd, the Valtellina the 65th and 66th Infantry Regiments. Both motorised divisions fought throughout 1941–42 and at El Alamein.

C2 Sergente Maggiore, Folgore Parachute Division, 1942

Major-General Frattini's Folgore (Lightning) Parachute Division comprised the 185th, 186th and 187th Parachute Infantry Regiments. It was formed in the winter of 1941–42, and served in North Africa – purely as infantry, rather than in its nominal role – from the spring of 1942 until November of that year. It was virtually annihilated at El Alamein. This figure is taken from a Del Giudice plate, with the addition of the camouflaged helmet and smock and the automatic rifle.

The sand-coloured bush-jacket echoes the shape of the European uniform of the paratroopers of this and the Nembo Division; the caped chest recalls the *sahariana*, and the shirt collar is worn outside the collarless neck of the jacket. The beret was peculiar to this branch of the army; note the small loop of tape at the top centre. The loose trousers are gathered at the ankle over ankle-boots. The paratroopers' branch badge – a silver Roman sword beneath a gold crown between gold wings – is worn centrally; the practice of wearing a set of chevrons on the beret is thought to have been peculiar to senior NCOs of the airborne corps. The blue collar patches, illustrated in detail elsewhere in this book, bear a silver star at the bottom, beneath a silver sword with a gold hilt on a gold wing. A gold parachute-wings badge is worn on the left breast, the wings supporting a parachute in white and blue beneath a gold crown picked out with red. The rank chevrons, two thin gold chevrons beneath one thick, are worn on both arms. The Del Giudice plate does not show the arm badge of the branch, sometimes but not in-

variably worn on the left upper arm; it consisted of a gold deployed parachute, its shrouds uniting in an open gold ring at the bottom, sometimes on a blue background overall.

The parachute helmet, with its more extensive leather harness, echoed the shape of the infantry helmet very closely. It was often worn with a cloth camouflage cover in a serpentine pattern of chestnut and forest green, and a smock in the same pattern was also issued. This thigh-length garment, with a single falling collar and a fly front, bore a cloth star in white on both sides of the collar. The fighting knife seems to have been a characteristic of the airborne branch. The weapon illustrated is the semi-automatic Beretta M1935 rifle, a 6·5mm. calibre weapon of sound design which was issued only in small numbers to specialist troops. (Its illustration in the hands of a paratrooper is pure speculation on the author's part, but seems feasible.)

C3 Private, Giovani Fascisti Division, 1942–43
A small division of two or three infantry battalions, this unit was held in army reserve at El Alamein. It had been intended to build an armoured division around them, but this never took place. They were still present, under the same title, in the fighting for Tunisia the following year, but by that time the two remaining battalions were fleshed out with Bersaglieri and artillery units to produce an *ad hoc* formation owing only the most nominal allegiance to the Party youth organisation from which it took its name. The 'Young Fascists' were boys of between seventeen and twenty-one years of age, who in this instance were drafted straight into the fighting forces through lack of alternative manpower.

The service dress headgear was a small fez worn on the back of the head, in black with a black tassel. The sahariana was favoured by these units and was very widely worn. This young soldier wears the collar insignia of the Rome GGFF battalion – a double scarlet 'flame' outlined in yellow; the organisation was territorial in basis. The equipment is conventional, and the weapon is the M.91/38 rifle. The figure is a composite of two plates from Del Giudice and Mollo. Note the Party dagger worn on the belt between pouches and bayonet frog.

D1 Generale di Brigata, 1941–43
This Italian general wears a typical front-line service uniform; considering the laxity of uniform regulations, however, it should not be taken as in any way definitive. The tropical sidecap/fieldcap is worn with the front flap down. On the front of the crown is the cap badge of the general officer corps – an ornate silver eagle on a red backing, with a silver cross on a central red lozenge on the eagle's chest. The rank is indicated by the single gold star of Brigadier on a red backing, sewn to a strip of patterned silver braid with red backing. The sahariana bears silver national star insignia on the collar, and rank insignia on attached shoulder-straps. These comprise the generals' silver-on-red eagle and the single star of rank. Medal ribbons include First and Second World War campaign and gallantry decorations, together with Fascist and Spanish awards.

D2 General der Panzertruppe Erwin Rommel, 1942
Rommel, promoted full general on 1 July 1941 and holding the rank until his promotion to Generaloberst on 1 February 1942, wore a variety of uniforms in the field, but all were characterised by an unfussy and practical appearance. This figure is taken from a colour photograph of the 'desert fox' dating from early 1942. The tunic and breeches are of the usual lightweight material worn by German officers in the tropics; colours varied from a distinctly green shade of olive, through every shade of brown, to almost off-white sand-yellow. Most photographs of Rommel in the summer and autumn of 1942 show him in a uniform of similar cut to this one, but much paler – a very washed-out sand-yellow drill. It also appears to have genuine turned-back cuffs, while this tunic has false cuffs. The straight pocket flaps are unusual – three-pointed flaps were more common in the Deutsches Afrika Korps. The tunic is worn over a soft-collared shirt; the cavalry-cut breeches are confined by the normal black topboots of a German officer.

When photographed in this, and in the paler uniform worn in later months, Rommel seems always to wear a minimum of insignia. He was entitled to wear the Knight's Cross with Oakleaves and Swords and his First World War *Pour le Mérite* at the throat, and these seem to have been in

evidence on most occasions; but his Iron Cross 1st Class, his Panzer Assault Badge and his Wound Badge seem to have been packed away except for very formal occasions, as were the substantial row of medal ribbons above the left breast pocket. He usually wore only his epaulettes and collar patches of rank, and the national eagle breast insignia. The eagle is in gold bullion embroidery on a black backing, the regulation colours for a Panzer general. (Generals of other branches often wore their silver bullion on dark green breast eagles on the tropical uniform.) The collar patches are in gold on bright red, and are the normal insignia of this rank. The epaulettes are on a red underlay; for a general they were made of interlaced triple lace, a silver double thickness between two gold, with two silver 'pips' equally spaced on the long dimension.

The service cap is the normal field grey model of the European uniform – no special *Schirmmütze* was produced for tropical wear. It has a black peak, a dark green velvet band, and – for generals – gold piping round the crown seam and the top and bottom of the band. Prior to January 1943 the eagle and swastika upper insignia and the wreath of the lower insignia were worn in silver; the national cockade in the wreath is of the usual sequence – black/silver/red reading inwards. For generals the double cap cords were of gold lace, secured with gold buttons. Rommel habitually wore a pair of cheap British cellophane sand goggles, which he surprisingly found more convenient and effective than any one of the several efficient and carefully designed models of DAK issue goggles.

Note that Rommel seldom wore a belt with this uniform. Over his hands he holds a tropical model greatcoat in drab khaki-brown, double-breasted, with two rows of four gold buttons. This coat lacked the coloured collar and facings of the European generals' model. The only insignia are the epaulettes of rank. He was also frequently photographed wearing a black leather greatcoat of similar cut. His famous brown tweed scarf is also illustrated here. Note the absence of red generals' stripes on the breeches – some German generals in Africa wore this distinction, others omitted it.

'Hermann Meyer' tropical field cap of Luftwaffe combat troops: see colour plate commentary H3. Of sandy drill with red lining, the cap has a button-on neck-flap fitting over the strap buttons and one rear central button, all brown plastic here but sometimes grey metal. Flat woven white badges and black-white-red cockade on pale tan patches, grey-blue strap – sometimes brown. This style of cap was sometimes worn by all ranks, and is occasionally observed with officers' cap-cords fitted, either silver or matt white. (Daniel Rose Collection)

D3 Major, Panzer Division Staff, 1941–42

This staff officer, perhaps the Divisional Ib or IIa of 15th or 21st Panzer Division, wears the standard tropical uniform, and the tropical side-cap with officer's distinctions. The cap is not very frequently seen in photographs and seems to have been almost entirely confined to Panzer personnel, who might find the peaked field cap awkward in the confines of the vehicles. It was of thin olive drab material, lined scarlet, with a single metal ventilation hole immediately above the point of the 'turn-up'. The upper section is slightly different in shape to the usual European version, being flatter and shallower. For all ranks it bore the eagle and swastika and the national cockade insignia. Officers might or might not wear the prescribed silver-on-tan version of the former and the raised black/silver/red officers' quality cockade; other ranks' insignia were sometimes worn, in blue-grey on tan, and in flat black/white/red weaving on a tan diamond patch respectively. The silver piping around the crown and in the front cutaway of the turn-up were the

distinctions of commissioned rank.

The uniform was similar in cut for officers and men, and although the colour varied from olive drab, through brown, to pale sand, there is no particular significance in this; different manufacturers' batches were of slightly differing shades, and weathering took care of the rest. It is worn here over a shirt and tie of similar colour. Some of the many variations of upper and lower garments and footwear are illustrated in these plates; here, the major wears lightweight breeches and the high-laced canvas and leather desert boots. Breeches were not confined to officers in North Africa, being frequently seen in the ranks in combination with the high boot. The webbing belt is worn here with the prescribed officers' buckle; many officers retained the standard brown leather service dress belt with double-claw buckle. The map-case was not issued in a special tropical version, but the black leather was often painted over with a tan shade.

The epaulettes of major's rank, in a double-thickness twisted pattern of dull silver cord without 'pips', are worn on the underlay panel of branch colour – *Waffenfarbe*: here, the pink of armoured troops. The gold Gothic 'D' identifies a divisional staff officer. All commissioned ranks below general rank wore the same collar-patch design with the sole distinction of narrow lines of lace in the appropriate Waffenfarbe down the centre of each of the two silver bars, which were mounted on a dark green backing. Panzer personnel of all ranks wore pinned to the lower lapel of the tropical jacket the small silver skull badges from their European uniform collar-patches. Many officers did not bother to replace the other ranks' eagle breast badge with the silver badges from their European uniform, and continued to wear – as here – the blue-grey eagle on its tan backing. This officer wears the Iron Cross 2nd Class ribbon in his buttonhole, the Iron Cross 1st Class pinned to his left breast pocket, and a Panzer Assault badge below it, indicating that he had seen combat in tank actions on at least three separate occasions. Above his pocket are the ribbons of a Long Service medal and the Italian-German Africa campaign medal, issued by the Italians early in 1942.

E1 Obergefreiter, Aufklärungs-Abteilung (Mot.) 3, 1941

The standard tropical uniform of rank and file of the DAK, as it would have been worn immediately on arrival in Africa and before the practicalities of desert warfare forced its modification by individuals. This corporal is dressed and equipped as he would have been for one of the parades and inspections in Tripoli in mid-February 1941, and his insignia agree with those of one of the first units of *5 leichte Division* to arrive – the motorised reconnaissance battalion.

The sun-helmet was an issue item, but did not enjoy much popularity, although it is still seen in photographs of the late stages of the desert war. It bore two metal pin-on badges on the side in the form of shields of similar design to the decals applied to the steel helmet – a silver eagle and swastika on black on the left, and a national tricolour shield on the right. The jacket, exactly as in D3 as regards cut, bears the usual grey-on-tan breast eagle. The collar bars, worn by all non-commissioned ranks, are of dull grey with dull khaki-ochre details; they were sewn direct to the material of the collar without a backing patch. The shoulder straps of ranks below *Unteroffizier* were plain apart from the edges, piped in the branch's Waffenfarbe: for motorised reconnaissance units, copper brown. The black Wound Badge worn on the pocket signifies that the wearer has been wounded in action once. The double chevrons of *Obergefreiter's* rank, in dull khaki-ochre on olive, are sewn to the left upper arm only. The webbing belt, with olive-painted metal buckle of the standard German Army design, is fitted with the minimum of equipment for parade purposes. Two sets of three black leather pouches are fitted one on each side of the buckle; these European issue items were sometimes painted over with a tan shade at a later stage. The Mauser 84/98 bayonet, with wooden grips and a blued metal sheath, is attached to the belt on the left hip by a webbing frog with a retaining strap. Breeches and high laced boots are worn. The rifle is the standard *Wehrmacht* weapon, the Mauser 98K of 7·92mm. calibre.

E2 Signals mechanic, Transport Workshop, 1942

The famous tropical field cap, which appeared in

Four views of a Panzergrenadier Obergefreiter's tropical tunic in faded olive-green/khaki drill material. Grass green piping on shoulder straps; dull ochre on olive drab rank chevrons; olive-painted buttons; grey-blue on tan breast eagle; General Assault badge on left breast. The belt and webbing Y-straps are of dull khaki with steel and brown leather fittings, and the buckle is painted green. The faint PG on the back shows that the wearer was once a prisoner in the hands of French troops: Prisonnier de Guerre. (Biwandi Collection)

Officer's pattern tropical belt – dull brown metal buckle on khaki webbing. Many officers retained their normal brown leather service belts with a double-claw frame buckle. (Biwandi Collection)

shades across the whole colour spectrum associated with German tropical clothing, often seems from photographs to be notably lighter than the rest of the uniform. This is partly because the cap was particularly exposed to sun and the occasional rain; partly because it quickly became fouled with sweat and was often washed – when water was available; and partly because it became the fashion to bleach the cap, using anti-gas capsules, which the ingenious soldiery discovered to be not entirely useless items of equipment! It was an extremely practical and stylish headgear and was very popular, quickly replacing the sun-helmet whenever possible. It bore the usual eagle and swastika badge on the front of the crown, in blue-grey on tan, and a flat woven cockade of black-white-red on a diamond-shaped tan patch below this. It was often decorated with an inverted vee of Waffenfarbe (see photographs accompanying text), but as often this was omitted, and it was officially forbidden in July 1942 – not that the order was universally obeyed, by any means.

This figure represents the generally comfortable and scruffy appearance of the desert soldier. The jacket is worn here with long, loose trousers confined by puttees, and brown leather field boots. There is no significance in the variations of leg and footwear seen in all wartime photographs, beyond the fact that for health reasons shorts were forbidden in the front line. Off duty, the soldier wears his belt without field equipment. Collar and breast insignia are conventional. His shoulder straps are piped in the light blue of transport personnel, and his unit is identified on a field-grey slip-on loop. Before the war, and in the early months, all branches wore shoulder straps with unit numbers embroidered in Waffenfarbe, or in white or yellow metal, for rankers, NCOs and officers respectively. This practice, which was bad security and expensive in the case of transfers from unit to unit, was discontinued; when out of the line the soldier often wore a unit number on this type of slip-on title instead. We have illustrated the 434 of a workshop company of Panzerarmee Afrika. On the lower right sleeve appears the trade badge of a Signals Mechanic, a yellow Gothic 'M' above a thunderbolt. This should have been worn on an olive drab patch, but European-style dark green patches were

widely worn in Africa – as, indeed, were European rank chevrons, etc.

Below the trade badge is sewn the famous cuff-title authorised on 28 July 1941 for all German Army personnel, of whatever rank or branch, who had served in the theatre of operations for at least two months. The single word AFRIKA-KORPS in silver block capitals was embroidered on a dark green band with 3mm. silver edges, with light brown outer edges.

E3 Feldwebel, Feldgendarmerie, 1942

The Feldgendarmerie or military police performed the usual disciplinary and traffic duties in Africa as in other theatres; each division had a troop, and further detachments served under Army Headquarters. The NCO illustrated is dressed for a town patrol in the rear areas. He wears the sun-helmet with conventional insignia, with shorts and shirtsleeve order. The tropical issue shirt was of light sand-coloured drill, strongly made and finished. It was of pullover type, with four buttons on the front and two pleated patch pockets, and buttons and loops on the shoulder for attachment of straps. The straps shown here are of the usual olive tropical type, piped in the orange of the branch, and with an inner border of 9mm.-wide Tresse, or lace, in a dull khaki-ochre. This replaced the silver lace worn by NCOs on European uniform. The rank is identified by the exact design; here, the Tresse lines all three edges of the strap, and a single white metal pip is worn centrally. The Feldgendarmerie gorget was always worn when on duty; of dull white metal, suspended by a chain with flat masked links, it bears an eagle and swastika in yellowish luminous paint. Below this is a scroll with the word 'Feldgendarmerie' picked out in the same colour, on a grey background. The bosses at each upper corner were also painted. Note that it was forbidden to apply the breast eagle to the tropical shirt, and that the usual orange military police eagle and swastika arm badge is also omitted.

F1 Unteroffizier, Panzergrenadiere, 1942

The DAK's tanks and artillery were supported by Motorised Infantry regiments until mid-1942, which saw the arrival of the 164 leichte Afrika-Division and its three regiments of Panzergrenadiere – Nos. 125, 382 and 433. While these were still motorised units, without many half track armoured personnel carriers for infantry use, the troops were distinguished by the grass-green Waffenfarbe of the armoured infantry branch – seen here around the shoulder strap. The strap also bears the dull ochre Tresse around the long edges and the rounded end (inside the Waffenfarbe piping) which identifies the rank of Unteroffizier, or sergeant. (There are no exact British equivalents of the rather large number of German NCO ranks.) All ranks from Unteroffizier up wore the Tresse around the upper part of the collar, as illustrated, but the design of the collar patches themselves did not alter. This squad leader wears the Infantry Assault Badge in silver on the left breast, the ribbon of the Iron Cross 2nd Class in his buttonhole, and the usual breast eagle.

Belt and double shoulder braces are of olive-khaki webbing. On the belt are worn the triple magazine pouches for the excellent MP. 38/40 series 9mm. sub-machine gun, long adopted as the Wehrmacht's standard light automatic for junior leaders. (The universal but erroneous use of the popular name 'Schmeisser' for this weapon does a serious injustice to the actual designers, the Erma factory.) The outside left pouch has a small pocket at the bottom for the magazine loading tool. Sets of these pouches in both black leather and webbing were used in Africa. Most of the assault pack equipment is obscured in this view, but is illustrated in the next painting.

The standard Wehrmacht steel helmet was camouflaged for desert use by the individual soldier, using the sand-yellow paint issued for vehicles. Sometimes the finish was matted by mixing in sand with the paint; sometimes the paint covered the decals, sometimes not; and sometimes it was applied in an incomplete 'splotch' pattern over the original field grey surface. Here the right hand decal, the national tricolour shield in black, white and red, is exposed. Sun-and-sand goggles, of some half a dozen different designs, were widely used by troops of all ranks and all branches in North Africa.

Interesting group of German prisoners display many details of uniform and kit; note popularity of white scarves, and pale field caps. (Imperial War Museum)

F2 Gefreiter, Infanterie, 1943

An infantry lance-corporal in the standard assault equipment of the German soldier in Africa. His helmet is covered in hessian from a sand-bag. He wears the usual jacket, and field trousers bloused at the ankle over brown leather boots. The belt supports an entrenching tool hanging reversed in a webbing case on the left hip, with the webbing-frogged bayonet scabbard tucked into its straps. Behind the right hip is the 'bread-bag', containing rations, washing kit, eating utensils, field cap, and small personal kit. Above it is the canteen, here the European model with an oval cup and a brown felt cover; this shade has no significance to the theatre of operations, as manufacturers supplied them with brown, grey, or greenish covers indiscriminately. Another type which saw service had a smaller, round cup of black plastic, and yet a third had a brown, smooth finish owing to a coat of plastic-impregnated wood over the aluminium. The capacity was a quart. The last-mentioned type had a cruciform web cradle, as opposed to the single vertical strap shown here.

The gasmask canister is of metal, painted tan, and slung round the body on a web strap. The canvas assault frame clips to the D-rings on the Y-straps behind the shoulder, and is held at the bottom corners by clips at the ends of the pack straps which pass over the shoulder and round and back under the arms. Behind the top of the frame was strapped the mess-tin, with below it the camouflaged shelter quarter, and (obscured here) a canvas bag holding rope and pegs for making a tent out of shelter quarters; a sweater; and iron rations.

The 'jerrycan', that excellent and versatile container so eagerly captured and later copied by the British and Americans, was marked with a white cross when it contained water. Note the silver-on-brown 'AFRIKA with palms' cuff title on the left forearm, which replaced – officially – the earlier style worn on the right arm. It was issued to personnel who had served for six months in the theatre; who were wounded in combat in the theatre; or who had been evacuated because of disease after serving at least three months. Winners of major gallantry awards received it irrespective of service duration. Like the earlier

pattern, it was also worn on the greatcoat sleeve. It was instituted by order of the Führer on 15 January 1943.

F3 Schütze, Infanterie, 1941–43
This infantry private is the squad machine-gunner, and carries the superb MG.34, the quick-firing 7·92mm. light machine gun which was standard issue to the Wehrmacht until the appearance in 1943 of the cheaper and equally efficient MG.42. The MG.34 had a cyclic rate of between 800 and 900 rounds per minute; it measured 48 inches long, weighed just over 25lb, and was fed either by a 250-round belt or a 50-round drum. A sling was clipped to the bottom of the pistol-grip and to an attachment half way up the barrel, but it is usually seen carried in this manner. A metal case for two spare barrels is slung on the gunner's back, and he also carries an ammunition box. Machine-gunners were not issued with rifles, for obvious reasons, and so did not wear ammunition pouches. Instead they carried a leather case of MG.34 stripping and cleaning tools, and an anti-aircraft sight, on the right front of the belt; and a P.08 or P.38 pistol in a holster on the left side, for personal defence. Here, the holster is obscured as the gunner has looped the strap of his sand-painted steel helmet over it. Note the silver-eagle-on-a-black-shield decal, the normal decoration of the left side of this helmet.

The field cap bears the usual badges, and an inverted Vee of white Waffenfarbe piping, indicating infantry. The same piping edges the shoulder straps of the tropical issue khaki-drab greatcoat, cut exactly as the field grey European model.

G1 Oberleutnant, Artillerie, 1941–43
This officer is a Ritterkreuzträger; the Knight's Cross was a highly honoured decoration for gallantry and would be worn at all times. It was worn on a ribbon (central red stripe with outer white stripes and black edges) under the shirt collar, and the shirt was thus buttoned to the neck to allow the medal to be displayed. It was only awarded to officers and men who already held both classes of the Iron Cross; thus this officer wears the ribbon of the 2nd Class in his buttonhole, and the medal of the 1st Class pinned to his left breast pocket. Beneath the latter are the black Wound Badge, and the General Assault Badge, to which the artillery were entitled; it features an eagle and swastika above a crossed grenade and bayonet. The AFRIKAKORPS cuff title is worn on the right arm.

The uniform is entirely conventional. The pale field cap has officers' silver piping at the crown and in the front scoop of the turn-up seam. The silver-on-tan officers' eagle badge is worn on the front of the crown, and a red artillery Waffenfarbe *soutache* encloses the national cockade. Some officers wore this in the rank and file version, in flat weaving on a brown diamond; others wore the black-silver-red raised version of their rank, without a backing patch. The breast eagle is the regulation European model for officers, silver on dark green. The standard officers' collar patch has red distinctions, and the epaulettes have a red underlay. They are the junior officers' model, of ribbed silver braid, with the single gold 'pip' of an Oberleutnant; Leutnante wore no pips, and Hauptmanne wore two. The long field trousers are bloused at the ankle over desert sneakers. A leather shoulder strap and cradle support the canteen (for officers and other personnel who did not normally wear the standard assault equipment) and a map case is slung on the brown leather field service belt with a double-claw buckle.

G2 Panzerschütze, 1941–43
The true appearance of the Afrika Korps old sweat, up the desert! The tank crewman illustrated here during a halt is wearing the black Panzer rankers' sidecap, which was quite often retained in North Africa. It has the regulation pale grey-on-black eagle and swastika badge above a national cockade enclosed in a Vee of pink *Waffenfarbe*. The shirt is worn with rolled sleeves – note the dog-tag, and the desert goggles allowed to hang at the throat. The shorts are rolled high. Regulations insisted that to protect the legs from the ever-present desert sores, flies, etc., only the high-lacing desert boots should be worn when shorts were used; photos prove that this sensible order was more often honoured in the breach than the execution. The ankle-length

desert sneakers, in essence simply cut-down versions of the desert boot, were very widely worn by all personnel. This soldier is carrying mess-tins, their handles looped together, and reading the latest issue of the Afrika Korps newspaper, *Die Oase*. The only insignia worn are the pink-piped olive drab shoulder straps, and even these were very often omitted. All clothing is faded and worn, and shorts and shirt were often bleached deliberately in the same way as the cap.

G3 Tenente, Italian tank regiments, 1941–43
The padded leather protective helmet with attached neck-flap and the three-quarter-length leather coat were issued to all Italian armoured crews. The rank was sometimes indicated on the left breast, in the same style as on the side cap, although junior officers seem sometimes to have pinned the stars of their rank directly to the leather. The collar insignia of the M-tank regiments was as illustrated – a double scarlet 'flame' with the usual silver star, sewn to a backing patch in blue – the branch colour of the armoured and motorised troops. The epaulettes would have been piped in blue, when worn with the tropical service dress; they were not applied to the leather coat. This figure is taken from Mollo, with some additional insignia.

H1 Unteroffizier, Luftwaffe Flak-artillerie, 1941–42
Rommel's deadly 88mm. dual-purpose guns, designed as anti-aircraft weapons but used with devastating effect as anti-tank and medium field guns, were largely manned by the Flak-artillerie, the Luftwaffe's anti-aircraft branch. Many units of this branch served in the desert war, from the earliest intervention of the German forces up to the final collapse in Tunisia. By the time of El Alamein the importance of this branch was recognised by assembling two regiments – the 102nd and 135th – into the 19th Flak Division. Further details will be found in this author's previous title in the Men-at-Arms series, *Luftwaffe Airborne and Field Units*.

Early in the campaign the Luftwaffe officers and men seem to have worn army tropical uniforms with partial addition of Luftwaffe insignia; photos exist showing this uniform worn with Flak shoulder straps and collar patches, and retaining the army breast eagle (see illustration F1, *Luftwaffe Airborne and Field Units*.) Later they received a distinct tropical uniform of their own (see next illustration.) This sergeant, who is helping out as an ammunition-number in an emergency, wears the usual army field cap with the insignia from European headgear – a white eagle and swastika of the unique Luftwaffe shape on a dark blue background, above a raised national cockade. His breast eagle is also from a European uniform, as are his shoulder straps – Luftwaffe blue, with the silver Tresse of his rank, and the red piping of the Flak-artillerie. His red collar patches bear a single stylised 'wing' of white metal, and are framed by a short L-shaped section of silver NCO Tresse, the whole being sewn to the tropical uniform, which lacks the usual dull ochre tropical Tresse. (We have taken this combination of insignia from a wartime photograph of a Flak NCO in the desert.) The Flak badge on the left breast is the equivalent in this branch of an Assault badge, and signifies meritorious service at the front. It is in dull silver, and features an anti-aircraft gun beneath a Luftwaffe eagle, the whole within, and breaking the edge of, an oval wreath. The rest of the uniform is conventional. The basket is the three-round ammunition container used for 88mm. ammunition; the sergeant carries a round of armour-piercing.

Italian prisoners putting their documents in their caps for inspection; note general loose outline of uniforms, and collar and sleeve insignia. (Imperial War Museum)

H2 Hauptmann, Luftwaffe Flak-artillerie, 1942–43
This figure illustrates the Luftwaffe tropical uniform, identical in cut for officers and men, which was issued in 1942. While officers had worn their collar patches of rank and branch on the army

tunic, this practice was not followed with the new tunic, and epaulettes became the only means of identification. This officer wears the usual ribbed silver braid epaulettes of a German junior officer, with his branch's red Waffenfarbe underlay and the two gold pips of his rank. His breast eagle is an other ranks' white-on-blue model – officers seem very frequently to have worn this insignia rather than the silver-on-blue style of commissioned rank. The Luftwaffe Ground Combat badge in white metal is pinned to his left breast pocket and the Iron Cross 2nd Class ribbon is worn through the buttonhole. He wears the usual plain leather belt with double-claw buckle of a German officer's field service dress, with a holstered Walther P.38 as a personal weapon. The loose trousers of this uniform, bloused over ordinary soldiers' boots, have a large left thigh pocket. The Luftwaffe officer's white-topped summer and tropical peaked cap is worn, with conventional badges, the upper insignia being of silver on white backing. With the appearance of this uniform also came a sand-coloured sidecap of similar shape to the Luftwaffe's European side cap, and a blue-grey or white eagle and swastika cap insignia on a tan triangular background patch, which was applied to the peaked field cap and the side cap, above the raised black-white-red cockade used on European headgear. Photographs accompany the text.

H3 Unteroffizier, Luftwaffe Ramcke Parachute Brigade, 1942–43

(We have illustrated an NCO in order to show the rank insignia worn on the smock, but in fact this rank would almost certainly have been armed with the MP.40.) The famous *Fallschirm-Brigade Ramcke*, led by Generalmajor Bernhard Ramcke, arrived in Africa to bolster Rommel's forces before El Alamein in July and August 1942; it comprised three rifle battalions with small supporting elements, but had no vehicles. The brigade fought fiercely on the southern sector of the Axis line in the battle of 23 October–3 November, and made an epic retreat to the Fuka line, capturing British transport, fuel and rations on the way. After a period in the rear, this unit was again committed to action in Tunisia, where its survivors were captured.

The paratroopers were issued the standard Luftwaffe tropical uniform (see H2 above) over which they wore their distinctive, generously-cut jump-smock. All three patterns are known to have been used in Africa: that illustrated, with a splinter pattern; the later 'water pattern' with a softer mingling of colours; and the tan type prepared for the invasion of Malta. The only insignia worn were the stylised rank 'wings' on cloth patches sewn to the arm, by NCOs from Unteroffizier upwards and by officers; and the characteristic Luftwaffe breast eagle. Jump-boots, ordinary brown leather service boots, and desert sneakers were all used. The leather equipment – belt, Y-straps, pouches, etc. – was observed in black and brown, and some olive webbing was also issued. The paratroopers' extra ammunition bandolier, slung round the neck, was used in camouflaged and plain tan patterns, and probably in blue-grey as well. The distinctive paratroopers' helmet was painted tan. This NCO has the standard Mauser rifle, and canvas grenade-bags – each holding three stick-grenades – slung round his body like water-wings; a web strap passed behind the neck joining the top centre of each bag, and two others went across the back under the arms, joining the centre of the inner edges of the bags.

The odd-looking cloth peaked cap, with buttoned-on neck flap, was known as the Hermann Meyer, a joking reference to Göring. It was used in Africa and other Mediterranean areas, from April 1942 onwards, by some parachute units and by elements of the Hermann Göring Division. The insignia was in white, flat-woven on a sand-coloured backing, and followed the usual Luftwaffe design. While photos exist of this cap being worn, the light sand-coloured tropical sidecap was more common. The Meyer was sometimes fitted with cap-cords by officers.

Men-at-Arms Series

THE SEVEN YEARS WAR
MONTCALM'S ARMY
WOLFE'S ARMY*
THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ARMY OF THE SEVEN YEARS WAR
FREDERICK THE GREAT'S ARMY

NAPOLEONIC WARS
FOOT GRENADIERS OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD
CHASSEURS OF THE GUARD
BLÜCHER'S ARMY
RUSSIAN ARMY OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS
THE BLACK BRUNSWICKERS
AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ARMY OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS
WELLINGTON'S PENINSULAR ARMY
KING'S GERMAN LEGION*
NAPOLEON'S POLISH TROOPS*
NAPOLEON'S GERMAN ALLIES (1)
NAPOLEON'S GERMAN ALLIES (2)
SPANISH ARMIES OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS
PORTUGUESE ARMY OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS
NAPOLEON'S ARTILLERY
NAPOLEON'S DRAGOONS AND LANCERS
NAPOLEON'S CUIRASSIERS AND CARABINIERS
SCANDINAVIAN ARMIES IN THE NAPOLEONIC WARS
NAPOLEON'S LINE CHASSEURS

OTHER 19TH CENTURY CAMPAIGNS
RUSSIAN ARMY OF THE CRIMEA
BRITISH ARMY OF THE CRIMEA*
ARMY OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE 1870–88
THE SUDAN CAMPAIGNS 1881–98
THE BOER WAR
THE ZULU WAR
THE INDIAN MUTINY
THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

WORLD WAR II
THE WAFFEN SS
LUFTWAFFE AIRBORNE AND FIELD UNITS
THE PANZER DIVISIONS
THE JAPANESE ARMY OF WORLD WAR II
THE SOVIET ARMY
ROMMEL'S DESERT ARMY
MONTGOMERY'S DESERT ARMY
THE U.S. ARMY 1942–45

BRITISH REGIMENTS
THE BLACK WATCH
THE COLDSTREAM GUARDS
THE ROYAL SCOTS GREYS
THE ARGYLL & SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS
THE ROYAL ARTILLERY
THE KING'S REGIMENT
THE GURKHA RIFLES*
THE SOUTH WALES BORDERERS
THE ROYAL GREEN JACKETS

AMERICAN SUBJECTS
THE STONEWALL BRIGADE
THE IRON BRIGADE
THE U.S. CAVALRY
GEORGE WASHINGTON'S ARMY
THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
THE AMERICAN PROVINCIAL CORPS
THE BRITISH ARMY IN NORTH AMERICA 1775–83*
THE AMERICAN WAR 1812–14*
THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC
THE ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA
THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR 1846–48
THE AMERICAN INDIAN WARS 1860–90
WOLFE'S ARMY*
MONTCALM'S ARMY
THE U.S. ARMY 1942–45

MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS
THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION
THE COSSACKS
ENGLISH CIVIL WAR ARMIES
THE ROMAN ARMY FROM CAESAR TO TRAJAN*
MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN ARMIES 1300–1500
THE LANDSKNECHTS
THE ARAB LEGION
THE ROYAL NAVY 1790–1970
THE BRITISH ARMY 1965–80
THE GREEK AND PERSIAN WARS 500–323 B.C.

* cased edition also available

ISBN 0 85045 095 0